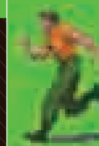
OLD!

THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

retro GAMER™

AMSTRAD | COMMODORE | SEGA



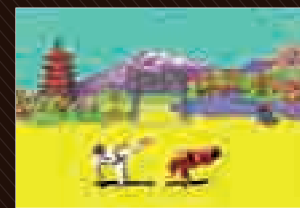
COMBAT SCHOOL

"DROP DOWN AND GIVE ME TWENTY" – THE EVOLUTION OF TRACK & FIELD

THE MAKING OF...

EXPLODING FIST

BEHIND THE SCENES OF ONE OF 8-BIT GAMING'S BIGGEST BEAT-'EM-UP FRANCHISES



WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



INSIDE:

THE BIG INTERVIEW

FOOTBALL FEVER

KEVIN TOMS AND THE COLLYER BROTHERS ON THE HISTORY OF FOOTBALL MANAGEMENT

THE MAKING OF...

PRINCE OF PERSIA

JORDAN MECHNER ON CREATING ONE OF GAMING'S MOST ICONIC HEROES

CONTROL FIRE

SPACED INVADERS

GALAXIAN

YOUR DEFINITIVE GUIDE TO NAMCO'S CLASSIC SHOOT-'EM-UP FRANCHISE

POPULATION EXPLOSION

PHANTASY STAR

FROM 8-BIT RPG TO ONLINE BEHEMOTH – THE STORY BEHIND SEGA'S FAMOUS FRANCHISE

RETROINSPECTION

PHILIPS CD-i

ONE OF GAMING'S BIGGEST FAILURES, OR THE BEGINNING OF SONY'S PLAYSTATION?

FEATURED THIS MONTH IN RETRO GAMER

OWEN RUBIN
MEET THE CASTAWAY BEHIND A STRING OF CLASSIC ATARI HITS

SAM & MAX
THE COMEDIC CRIME-FIGHTING DUO RETURN IN FLAMBOYANT STYLE

DRACULA X
THE CASTLEVANIA GAME THAT KONAMI DIDN'T WANT YOU TO PLAY

MORTAL KOMBAT
PAYING HOMAGE TO THE GORIEST BEAT-'EM-UP EVER MADE

THE RETROBATES

WORST CHRISTMAS PRESENT



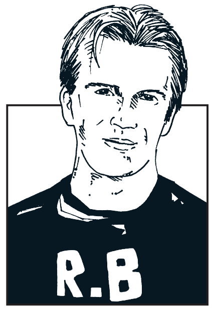
ASHLEY DAY

There's no such thing. I loved them all equally. (This may not be true but, just in case my mum's reading, I have to say it.)
Expertise: The world's second best retro magazine
Currently playing: *Phoenix Wright 2*
Favourite game of all time: *Shining Force III*



DAVID CROOKES

My aunt once bought me *Dragon's Lair* for the CPC. At first, it appeared a decent choice – but my hours of trying to get get past level two caused me to miss the Christmas Day film. Not happy.
Expertise: All things Amstrad CPC, *Dizzy*, Atari Lynx and PlayStation
Currently playing: *Dragon's Lair level two*
Favourite game of all time: *Broken Sword*



RICHARD BURTON

Roller skates: the ones you attached to your trainers with straps and adjusted with a wing-nut. An accident waiting to happen, which… did. Do you want sprouts with that broken ankle?
Expertise: Spectrum, Amstrad, anything
Currently playing: *18 Wheeler*
Favourite game of all time: *Manic Miner*



JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

I can't actually remember ever getting a bad Christmas present (we celebrated on Christmas Eve, Polish style) – I was always more interested in the Barszcz and Pierogi!
Expertise: Doujin games
Currently playing: Reading books by Hunter S Thompson
Favourite game of all time: *Trampoline Gunmen*



PAUL DRURY

My mum gave me a cocktail shaker and a pair of bright red sweatbands. Presumably to be worn during prolonged shaking sessions.
Expertise: Getting programmers to confess their drug habits
Currently playing: *Dance Factory*
Favourite game of all time: *Sheep In Space*



MIKE TOOLEY

On our first Christmas my wife Zelda gave me her present, too heavy for the N64 game I'd been hinting at for weeks. Imagine my delight at unwrapping an all-singing, all-dancing pasta maker. Doh indeed.
Expertise: Games that few have heard of and less have played
Currently playing: *Call Of Duty 3*
Favourite game of all time: *Mr Do!*



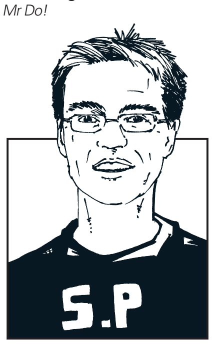
DARRAN JONES

My eldest sister gets a stereo; my younger sister receives a bike, while I get stuck with a crappy radio/alarm clock. I was absolutely gutted.
Expertise: Juggling a wife, two children and Retro Gamer
Currently playing: *Gears Of War*
Favourite game of all time: *Robotron: 2084*



CRAIG GRANNELL

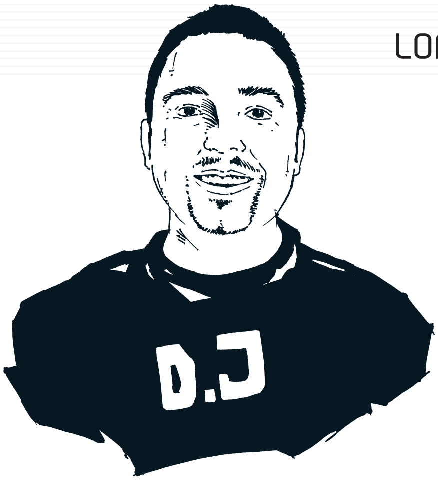
I distinctly remember getting a recorder, when I was five. It was cheap and fragile, breaking almost instantly. Or maybe I snapped it on purpose, 'cause I subconsciously wanted a guitar.
Expertise: Games whose controllers don't require you to have 37 fingers
Currently playing: *Alter Ego*
Favourite game of all time: *H.E.R.O.*



SIMON PHILLIPS

I remember one year when the missus actually managed to buy everything on my extensive Christmas list. Sadly, she'd managed to buy the wrong version of every single item. She wasn't very happy when I changed them all.
Expertise: Juggling babies and work
Currently playing: *Gears Of War*
Favourite game of all time: *Head Over Heels*

LOADING...



It's now nearly a year since Issue 19 of Retro Gamer first hit the shelves, and I'm really beginning to feel that the magazine has hit its stride. Granted, we may have dumped the cover disk and the magazine no longer looks as homely as it once did, but I'd like to think that the content inside is now better than ever and that Retro Gamer remains as enjoyable to read now as when it first appeared.

Whilst I'm pleased with Retro Gamer's continued success and constantly climbing sales I can't take all the credit. Special thanks must go to Martyn Carroll, Aaron Birch, Shaun Bebbington and everyone else who saw a gap in the market and took a chance and let's not forget you the reader – easily the most important person of all.

It's going to be interesting to see what the next year has in store for us. All three next generation consoles will be on sale, and with them will be a massive range of downloadable retro content. And as renewed interest in our favourite hobby continues to grow, Retro Gamer will be there every step of the way to cover it.

Enjoy the magazine.





CONTENTS

BREATHING NEW LIFE INTO CLASSIC GAMES



68 THE DEFINITIVE...

GALAXIAN

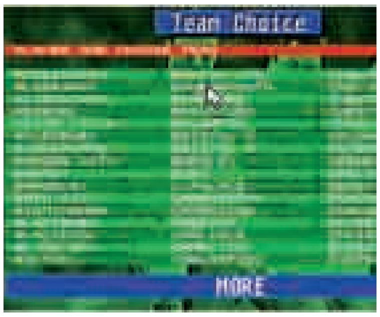
AFTER A BRIEF BREAK, STUART CAMPBELL RETURNS WITH YET ANOTHER DEFINITIVE GUIDE. THIS TIME, ABOUT ALL THINGS GALAXIAN. WE WOULD HAVE SAID GALAXIANS BUT THAT UPSETS HIM. DOH, TOO LATE...



THE MAKING OF...

PRINCE OF PERSIA

18 Where did one of the most athletic videogame characters ever created originate? Creator, Jordan Mechner has all the answers.



FOOTBALL FRENZY...

FOOTBALL MANAGER

32 From *Football Manager* on the Spectrum to… *Football Manager* on the Xbox 360. We speak to Kevin Toms and the Collyer brothers.



THE CLASSIC GAME

SUPER MARIO LAND

38 It's one of the great Game Boy platformers, yet never gets the same love as its home console brothers. Meet Mario's tiniest adventure.

INSIDE

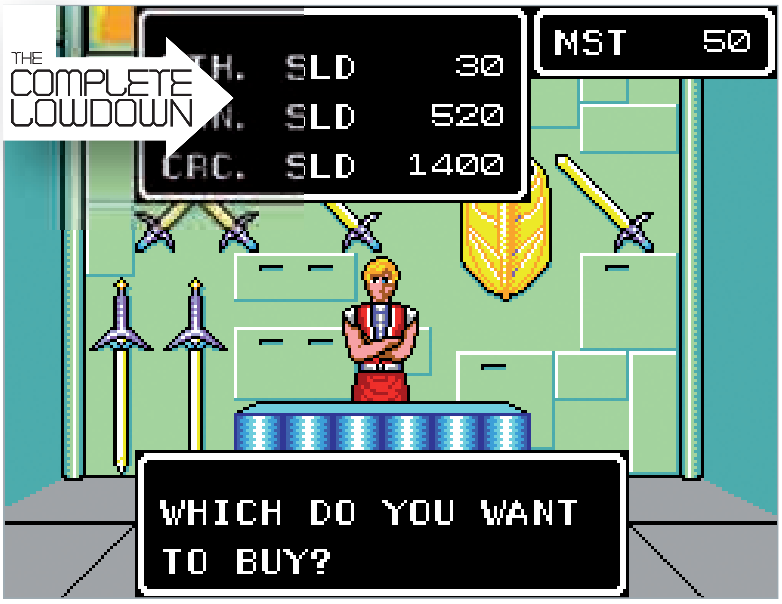
At-a-glance retro sections…

CONTENTS

ESSENTIALS

PHANTASY STAR

THE COMPLETE LOWDOWN



BEFORE THEY WERE FAMOUS



RETRORATED

THE GAMES LISTING...

If it's a bumper compilation or a great new remake (or a book), then Retro Rated is where you'll find it





SUBSCRIBE TO RETRO GAMER

Can't stand the thought of missing the next marvellous edition of Retro Gamer? Then simply head on over to our subscriptions pages and place your order now!

p104



RETROINSPECTION...

CD-I



THE MAKING OF...

THE FIST SERIES



DESERT ISLAND DISKS

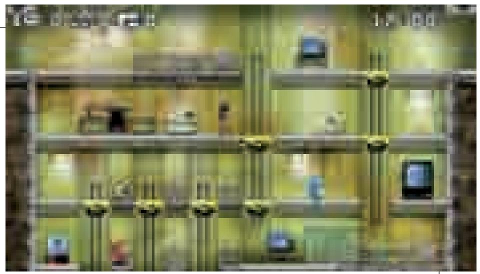
OWEN RUBIN

RETRO SCENE

THE GUIDE

What's hot this issue…

MISSION IMPOSSIBLE?



She adds nothing extra to the gameplay but she sure is easy on the eyes.

RETRO GAMER GETS ITS HANDS ON PLAYABLE CODE OF THE NEW IMPOSSIBLE MISSION REMAKE

After witnessing some rather depressing updates recently, it's refreshing to see what System 3 has achieved with the incoming *Impossible Mission*.

Rather than drop Agent 4125 into a 3D update that bears little resemblance to the original game, System 3 has simply kept the 2D look of old, but given it a fresh new lick of digital paint, greatly enhancing the atmosphere of Elvin Atombender's foreboding lair. Gameplay is more or less identical to the original 1984 hit (hey, if it ain't broke, don't fix it) with the only real differences being that Agent 4125 is far easier to control and searching Atombender's many items of furniture is a lot quicker (very handy when a marauding robot is about to fry your arse). Finally, there are the two new characters that we originally mentioned back in Issue 28. While the inclusion of both the female agent and robot are purely cosmetic, they at least adds to the game's variety.



System 3 took the toilets out after hardcore fans said that they looked out of place.

While we've played both the PSP and DS versions of the game, we're tending to be drawn towards the DS outing, mainly because the touch screen is used to great effect to manipulate the pieces of code that are scattered throughout the 32-screen complex. Although the PSP version lacks the touchscreen, it's helped by vastly superior visuals and the 16:9 screen that gives a far more cinematic feel. In all though both titles are shaping up very nicely, so when we'd had our fill of playing we decided to ask System 3's CEO Mark Cale about the decision on making *Impossible Mission* its first new game.

"Simple really," says Cale. "*Impossible Mission* just has not aged as most retro games have. It has that fundamental feel of timeless gameplay and after *California Games*, is the most popular game that Epyx ever produced and is always in the top five best games ever voted for on various gaming sites and magazines. Taking all these factors into account it became really obvious that this should be the first Epyx game we remade."

Impossible Mission will be available in January and will be appearing on the DS, PSP and Nintendo's Wii, both as a Virtual Console release and a full price release. "The Wii version, like the DS and PSP games, will contain a number of different skins," confirms Cale. "The Virtual Console version on the other hand will be the original game only. There's only a limited amount of space to store your downloaded games to in flash memory, so it does not make sense for us to use up half of that on a re-skinned version with rendered graphics."

Before he left, we managed to get Cale to spill a little more information about the update of *The Last Ninja* and he didn't disappoint. "John Twiddy is working on it at the moment and we're very excited," he continues. "It will be available on the PSP, Wii and DS and will combine all three games. We will be keeping the isometric viewpoint and updating the sprite animations and fight moves but keeping each screen as a single-play area. We feel that the games must be kept in line with the original, so we will be using the original flip screens. The music will be kept the same but will be updated to match the ability of current hardware consoles with an option of actually playing the original games music that we have sampled into the game." Check out www.system3.com for more information.

HERO OF THE MONTH



HAGGAR

Every month, Retro Gamer looks back at a classic videogame hero. This month it's the turn of Capcom's Haggar.

First appearance: *Final Fight*

Distinguishing features: Dodgy looking moustache

Weapon of choice: Big meaty fists

Most likely to: Have his daughter kidnapped

Least likely to: Not bother rescuing her

Unusual fact: Haggar and *Street Fighter II*'s Zangief are fierce rivals who have stolen each other's signature wrestling moves.

RYU HITS THE BIG 20

CAPCOM'S MOST FAMOUS BRAWLER TURNS 20

It's amazing to think that we've been watching Ryu fling fireballs and mastering Ken's dragon punch for nearly 20 years. It's a fact that certainly hasn't been missed by Capcom though, as it recently announced to Japanese press that it will be bringing out several *Street Fighter*-related items to commemorate the popular brawler turning 20 next year. The biggest news is that a new movie is in the planning. Little is known about the movie other than that it's being produced by Hyde Park Entertainment (*Bringing Down The House*, *Antitrust*) and will focus on Chun Li. A new animated series is also being planned, although Capcom has revealed little about what it will focus on. Finally, a new *Street Fighter* game will also be released. While we'd like to think that this is going to be *Street Fighter 4*, it's most likely going to be a port of an earlier title. Oh, and if it's actually a game based on the actual film and using digitised characters John and Darran are going to commit ritual suicide…



Like the film, rubbish in practically every way.

LOADING SCREEN OF THE MONTH

NO 11: AGONY

To witness *Agony's* loading screen is to gaze upon some of the most stunning Amiga art ever drawn. While Psygnosis' shooter was tougher than the oldest of boots, even the most ignorant of gamers had to admit that it was a thing of beauty. If the game was as accessible as its stunning visuals, *Agony* could have been superb.



JUST IN AS WE REVEALED BACK IN ISSUE 28 THE RATHER FUNKY NEO GEO HOME-BREW SHOOTER LAST HOPE IS HEADING TO SEGA'S DREAMCAST. CHECK OUT WWW.PLAY-ASIA.COM FOR MORE INFO.



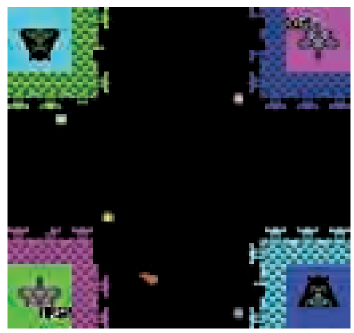
DOWNLOAD HEAVEN

MICROSOFT AND NINTENDO REVEAL FUTURE GAMES FOR XBOX LIVE ARCADE AND THE VIRTUAL CONSOLE

With the Wii mere days away Nintendo recently announced a whole list of games that should definitely be appearing on the Virtual Console before the end of the year. While many of the games we initially featured in last month's Retro Round-Up have now been shunted back to next year, there is nevertheless an exciting amount of games to sink your teeth into over the festive period, and surprisingly, the majority of the essentials are actually being released by Sega.

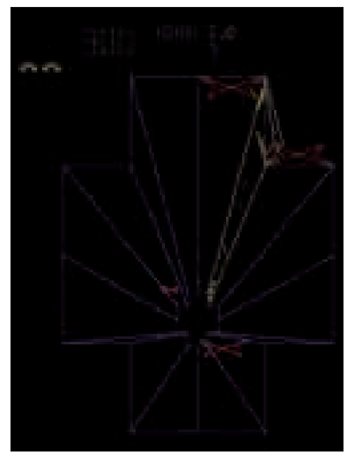
Sonic The Hedgehog, *Golden Axe*, *Ecco The Dolphin*, *Gunstar Heroes*, *Toe Jam & Earl*, *Ristar* and *Dr. Robotnik's Mean Bean Machine* are seven of the ten Mega Drive games that will be released this side of Christmas, and makes the three SNES releases, *F-Zero*, *Donkey Kong Country* and *SimCity* look rather weak in comparison. The only N64 game to make the line-up is the amazing *Super Mario 64*, while *Mario Bros*, *The Legend Of Zelda*, *Donkey Kong* and *Wario's Woods* will be joined by eight other NES games. As if that wasn't enough HudsonSoft is releasing five PC Engine titles including *Bonk's Adventure* (*PC Kid*), *Super Star Soldier* and *Bomberman '93*. In total over 30 titles should be available by the end of the year, and while it's an impressive figure (nearly matching a year's worth of Xbox Live Arcade games) we do have a few niggles – mainly what's happened to all the SNES releases? Granted, we're being treated to three great games, but the Japanese get *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past*, Konami's *Super Castlevania IV* and *Contra Spirits*, Capcom's *Street Fighter II* and *R-Type III* amongst others. Considering all these games have already been translated into English, it's somewhat maddening that they're only being released in Japan at this moment in time.

Nintendo hasn't been the only one trumpeting about classic downloads, as Microsoft has also announced several new games, although sadly, none of them will be available for download until early next year. After recently treating us to the likes of *Dig Dug*, *Ultimate Mortal Kombat 3* and *Contra*, Microsoft is serving up some more big hitting arcade games. The eight games are being raided from Atari's vaults and include *Centipede/Millipede*, *Battlezone*, *Asteroids/Asteroids Deluxe*, *Missile Command* and *Warlords* – an



If this doesn't prove to be a massive hit on Xbox Live Arcade, we'll eat someone else's hat.

impressive roster we're sure you'll agree. As usual there will be two versions of the game available, the original in all its arcade glory as well as one that's been graphically updated. Interestingly, some of the games will also feature several new game modes. *Battlezone* in particular sounds pretty exciting and will feature several multiplayer modes including Team Deathmatch and Capture the Flag, all of which will be playable over Xbox Live. Of course, while we're pleased to see so many quality titles being released, we can't help wonder how some of them will fare without their original arcade controls. *Centipede/*



Atari's *Tempest*: a superb shooter that we can't wait to return to.

Millipede and *Missile Command* are going to be particularly tough, as they originally used a trackball. Anyone that's ever played them via MAME with a joystick will know that a stick is a very poor substitute.

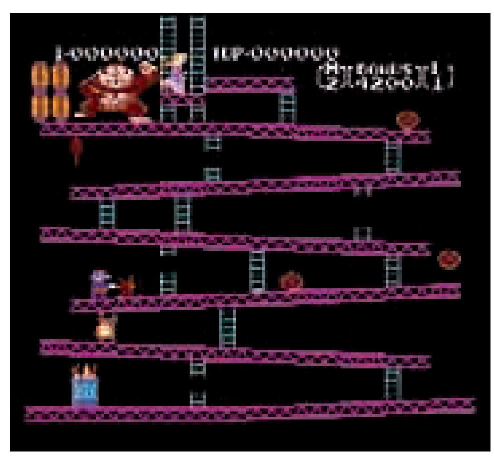
Still, now that the Wii is nearly with us, we can guarantee that there's going to be far greater competition between the two services over the next few years, one which Retro Gamers will greatly benefit from.



Konami's excellent *Contra III* is painfully absent from the UK launch line-up, so here's a screenshot from the European version to make up for it.



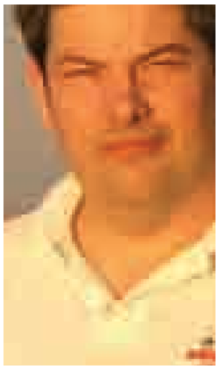
When Mario found out that Super Mario World had been delayed in the UK he was not best pleased…



The arcade version would have been nice to have, but you can't really go wrong with *Donkey Kong*.







Pictures © Archer Maclean

COMMENT

THE GAME ON SHOW.

"ONE CAB STOOD OUT LIKE A SORE THUMB AS IT'S SO UGLY – IT'S CALLED 'POLYPLAY' AND IS THE ONLY ARCADE MACHINE KNOWN TO HAVE EXISTED IN THE EASTERN BLOCK" ARCHER MACLEAN



» *Pong* – father of the industry.



» PolyPlay looks like a cheap MFI wardrobe from the Seventies.

Last month I had great fun working with dozens of other games folk to help launch the huge Game On show at the Science Museum with hordes of TV crews and journalists fighting for space to film or report on everything. The show is a massively updated display of the history of gaming, which originally kicked off in 2002 at the Barbican.

Few people outside the industry realise that games now generate more revenue than all Hollywood's box office takings. The revenue generated by hardware and software sales and online gaming is heading towards $50 billion. And that's a big number. Yet despite all the media hype that surrounds Hollywood there's very little to illustrate the games industry – until now.

As a kid in the Seventies I can vividly recall the day my parents took us kiddiewinks down to the Science Museum. The part I remember most was the basement with all its interactive mechanical and electrical gadgets that taught kids to understand something scientific by getting them to turn levers and press buttons and watch the results. We were there all day until some elderly chap with a cap on told us to leave as the museum had closed.

Now 30 years on, I am back in the science museum showing ten-year-olds how to play *Missile Command* or *Galaxian*. Not that they need much teaching because half will boast they've got it on their java-equipped mobile. They soon realise that a real *Pac-Man* is a damn site more challenging than the poor imitations on their phone.

On the opening day the queues to get in were going round the block, so the media splurge must have worked just a bit too well. Fortunately, things have settled down a bit now, but it's proving to be one of the most popular exhibitions the Science Museum has ever hosted.

WHAT'S ON DISPLAY...

Once inside the exhibit you get to see the history of gaming divided up into about 15 sections. There are 100+ games and exhibits to play with, loosely divided up into chronological areas, but you can wander back and forth at will.

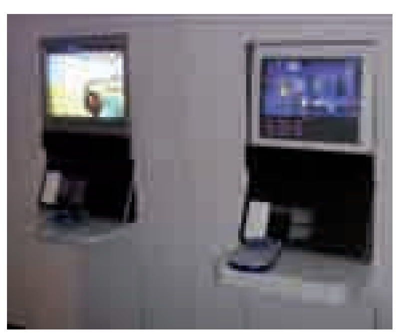
These sections include:

Early Arcade games: featuring 20 or so cabs all playable and on freeplay, as well as an antique 1962 PDP 1 that *Space War* was written on, *Pong* and two *Computer Space* machines from 1971/2. Later on there's a *Star Wars* cockpit that seems to make everyone coo with delight, and whilst very authentic looking it is in fact a very convincing MAME setup running the show within because a 25-year-old colour vector monitor might have a coronary if left on for six months. There's even an ultra-rare *Man-Eater* game, very obviously inspired by *Jaws* the movie, as it's mounted inside a giant gaping sharks mouth.

Consoles: then it moves into display working versions of all the games consoles that took the world by storm in the mid to late Seventies right up to date, starting off with the granddaddy of them all: the Magnavox Odyssey from 72, through to the main consoles from Atari, Nintendo, Sega, Sony, and Microsoft. I even spotted a rare Sony Hit-Bit console from 1983, which was from the MSX console era of the mid-Eighties, before PSX, sorry, PSone was announced in 1993.

Games culture: the games of Japan, Europe and USA, all being analysed and most of them are playable.

Sound effects and music: from the early days right up to the amazing *REZ* on the Dreamcast and PlayStation2.



» Walls of consoles all up and running.

Handheld games: an exhibit covering Game & Watch, GameGear, Neo-Geo Pocket, Lynx and so on, right up to date with a PSP.

Multiplayer: a selection of games from Atari's *Warlords* through to *Halo 2* on the Xbox.

Character Design: this looks at the way franchises have been successfully built up on the strengths of iconic figures like Pac-Man, Sonic the Hedgehog and off course Mario, and where they stand today aged 25+

Game Design and Production: this shows design notes and drawings from the teams behind major hits like the *Grand Theft Auto* series, *Pokémon*, and *The Sims*.

Future Technology: trends where you can play *Guitar Hero* on a 15ft projection screen, and interact with EyeToy games.

Throughout all areas there are masses of playable games locked behind screens with the controllers loose in front. I noticed that many visitors were family groups, which would soon split up – on opening day I couldn't help notice how family groups would file in through the entrance area, with Dad heading straight for the arcade games of his youth to impress upon his ten-year-old son how cool he was on *Asteroids*, whereas little Johnny wanted to do the same with *Guitar Hero*.

POLYPLAY!

Besides all the more familiar exhibits, one cab stood out like a really sore thumb because it's the ugliest thing ever. It's called 'PolyPlay' and is the only arcade machine known to have existed in the Eastern block. Whilst the West was going through the golden age of arcade games, drinking coke and eating pizza, this thing was being banged out in small numbers by underground workers hiding from the iron boots of communist oppression during the cold war era.

Arcades were forbidden in the Soviet Union since the Kremlin decreed they were a symbol of Western capitalism. (I bet though that the Russian communist party elite had a few Atari games in the secret dachas!)

But somehow a thinker in East Germany came up with a non-capitalistic solution,



» *Space Invaders* and the rare Taitan bug-eyed version.



» Me with David Braben ogling the curves of computer space.

and crafted this brutal hunk of cold war gameplay, that ran on tokens, therefore avoiding any money being needed! It was built in 1985 and features eight very simple games that are wincefully bad, albeit in colour, and as primitive as 1975 games, with 1965 styling, hand-built by Tank technicians, and very solidly engineered.

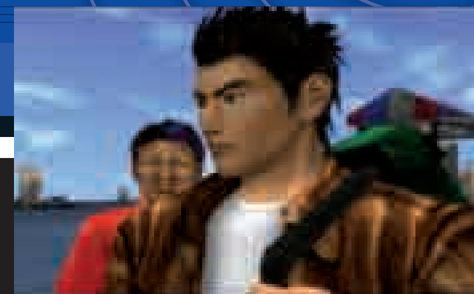
The Russian electronics within are a multi-card affair constrained by a foil-lined faraday cage using Russian-made chips that are impossible to decipher should they ever fail. The faraday cage might be there to reduce RF emissions, or perhaps to protect the innards in the case of an Electromagnetic pulse if the country ever got Nuked. Who knows?

One interesting quirk is that the machine has no sound, not because it's faulty, but because the circuitry has no provision for it at all. And when its switched on there's a row of ten coloured light bulbs flashing away behind the dimpled marquee that are really annoying, or perhaps are imparting a trance-inducing brain-washing subliminal-message. I dunno. Fascinating though.

The Game On Show is an excellent day out for any family, and broadly shows off what is a very young industry that's grown more rapidly than any other over the past 40 years, and is unlikely to stop any time soon. For more details of where and when check out: www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/exhibitions/gameon.

But don't hang around, Game Over occurs at the end of February 07.

ARCH



» With *Shenmue 3* canned, Ryo is forced to travel in limbo for eternity.

POPULAR VIDEOGAME SHOW PETITIONS TO BRING BACK SHENMUE

SHEN-NEWS

Name a group of obsessive videogame fans, and while followers of Nintendo would probably top the list, you can guarantee that the rabid supporters of Sega's *Shenmue* series wouldn't be too far behind.

Indeed, despite the series being unfinished and Sega suggesting on a number of occasions that it would never return to Ryo Hazuki's enchanting world – the first two games cost millions and made massive losses – it hasn't stopped fervent followers from getting all excited at even the mention of the potential continuation of *Shenmue 2*'s unfinished story.

Now though, it would appear that one particular fan has had enough and is trying to do everything in his power to ensure that Sega at least listens to him. Robert Florence, co-creator of BBC Scotland's videoGaiden, has started a petition to bring back *Shenmue* that has spread like wildfire across the internet. But why *Shenmue*, and not an equally deserving title like Sega's *NiGHTS* we asked him. "*Shenmue*'s a special one because of its ambition," explains Florence. "The games aren't perfect, I'm pretty sure even the most insane fan would admit that. But there is literally nothing else like *Shenmue*. Nothing that is so stubbornly true to its own way. You might love it, you might hate it, but you know it's one of a kind."

Florence is well aware that legal reasons prevent him from fully promoting his idea on the show, which is why he hit upon the idea of using videoGaiden as a springboard. "Early in the planning of the show, we were talking about something that might get the online community involved, something everyone could get behind," he continues. "Even though I know it is going to be an astronomically long shot, I wanted to see if we could get some kind of reaction from people who could make it [*Shenmue*] happen." While there's been no official response from Sega just yet, we're hopeful that it's only going to be a matter of time.

Visit videoGaiden for more information: www.bbc.co.uk/scotland/tv/videogaiden/campaign/index.shtml.



» Ryo's starting to fear that his career has reached an untimely end.



» Sega executives give Ryo the answer when he enquires about a sequel…



» This is how kids used to play arcade games.

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH



WILE E. COYOTE

VILLAIN OF THE MONTH

Without a bad villain there would be no good heroes. What would Shredder be without the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles? Rubbish, that's what. This month: Wile E. Coyote

First Appearance: *Road Runner*

Distinguishing Features: Constantly salivating at the mouth

Weapon of Choice: Various Acme products

Most likely to: Chase after Road Runner with acme products

Least likely to: Say "meep meep"

Unusual fact: The reason Wile E. Coyote has access to so many Acme products is because he works for the company. He obviously has very sticky paws…

retro GAMER DIARY

THINGS TO LOOK FORWARD TO...

EVENT HOSTING retro GAMER
IF YOU WANT RETRO GAMER TO PROMOTE UPCOMING GAMES AND EVENTS, CONTACT US AT RETROGAMER@IMAGINE-PUBLISHING.CO.UK

Just because Retro Gamer looks to the past that doesn't mean that there aren't games and events to look forward to. Every month we'll be listing suitable games and events for you to add to your 'to do' list.



DECEMBER '06

GAME ON

Starts: Now

Location: London Science Museum

Admission: £8.50 adults, £6.50 Children

There's no excuse to not visit Game-On, as the show will be staying at London's Science Museum until February next year. Along with scheduled speakers, including a great many gaming celebrities, you'll find a nostalgia inducing range of classic arcade games and more consoles and computers than you can shake a joypad at. This is one event that you do not want to miss, so head on up to London as soon as possible.



DECEMBER '06

EA REPLAY

Released: 08 December

Publisher: EA

Price: £34.99

It was only a matter of time before EA decided to raid its back catalogue and announce its first retro compilation. Boasting a wide variety of different genres, *EA Replay* is set to include all three *Road Rash* titles, *Desert Strike, Syndicate, Wing Commander* and *Ultima: The Black Gate*. Prepare to be disappointed Amiga and PC fans, as it appears that all the games in question will be either SNES or Mega Drive ports.



DECEMBER '06

MICRO MACHINES

Released: 29 December

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

We're not too sure why there's been such a lengthy delay, but if the DS version is half as much fun as the recent PlayStation 2 outing then Sub Editor Luke Smith is going to be very happy indeed. We've yet to have seen any actual code, but hopes are high that *Micro Machines V4* will capture all the competitive atmosphere of the excellent Mega Drive original.



FEBRUARY 07

CAPCOM CLASSICS COLLECTION VOL 2

Released: 02 February

Publisher: Capcom

Price: £19.99

Format: PS2, Xbox

So then, Capcom's second PS2 and Xbox compilation contains all the games that featured on the first PSP compilation that hadn't been included on the first PS2 compilation, as well as all the games from the second PSP compilation that didn't already appear on the first PS2 compilation. Confused? Because we are. Still, here's a pic of Strider. Yay!



MARCH 07

METAL SLUG ANTHOLOGY

Released: 30 March

Publisher: Ignition

Price: £34.99

Format: PSP, Wii

It's somewhat disappointing to learn that the release of this potentially excellent compilation has now slipped, but when you consider that it's so SNK could include the recently released *Metal Slug 6* it becomes much easier to deal with. So then, seven *Metal Slug* games all crammed onto one shiny UMD or Wii disk. How could any self-respecting gamer not be looking forward to that? We certainly are.



MARCH 07

METAL SLUG 1

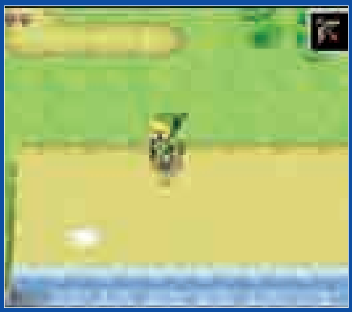
Released: 23 March

Publisher: Ignition

Price: £29.99

Format: GBA

More *Metal Slug* shenanigans, but this time it's just the original game and it's being ported to Nintendo's Game Boy Advance. In the past we'd have been a little concerned about SNK's premier franchise heading to the GBA, but after witnessing the superb *Metal Slug Advance* we have no worries. Providing the gameplay matches the impressive visuals, this could well be one of the GBA's last hurrahs.



MARCH 07

THE LEGEND OF ZELDA: PHANTOM HOURGLASS

Released: March

Publisher: Nintendo

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

Aarrghh, one of our most anticipated DS titles has slipped to next year. While *Phantom Hourglass* features a similar graphical style to *The Wind Waker*, it's set to make full use of the DS's unique abilities and will allow for competitive play against another DS owner. With everything from Link's movement to combat being controlled by the stylus this could well be the most unique *Zelda* yet.



MARCH 07

SNK VS CAPCOM: CARD FIGHTERS

Released: March

Publisher: Ignition

Price: £29.99

Format: DS

As great as the original Neo Geo Pocket Color version was, we're expecting the DS outing to be even better – mainly due to the fact that it will be fully controlled via the stylus. It's unclear whether there will be two different versions, or if it will be a direct port of the original. Providing that SNK Playmore don't mess around with the play mechanics too much DS Card Fighters has the potential to be huge.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM DECEMBER 1986



December 1986 – Amstrad was lacking in Christmas cheer, the Spectrum Plus 2 got kicked out by Boots, US Gold threw down the Gauntlet, Einstein met Willy and Micro Live was dead. Richard Burton whips up some eggnog and unwraps the retro presents…



» Amstrad's new PC1512 was supposedly going to conquer the American computing market. It didn't.

Amstrad, having had a distinctly purple patch regarding sales of its CPC systems, the acquisition of Sinclair Research for a mere £5,000,000 and having just designed and launched the new Spectrum Plus 2, suddenly found itself with multiple problems.

The most worrying for Amstrad was the news that sales of CPC software had plummeted in recent months. In fact, the sales were looking so bad that several software houses no longer planned to support the machine. Other companies were contemplating continuing production of games solely because of the support the CPC received in Germany, Spain and France. In many cases, the sales of software in Europe were out-stripping those in the UK. Disk versions of games were also selling poorly, to the point that many software houses were considering dropping the disk releases altogether.

The high street chemist, Boots, compounded Amstrad's woes by announcing it would stop selling the new Spectrum Plus 2 until further notice, because of continued reliability problems with the machine. However, this quality control issue, in which Boots had independently tested the machine and found a "performance defect" that they deemed unacceptable, was something that no other retailer had reported. Boots stated that once the problems were rectified, they would resume stocking the machine.

Amstrad responded by denying all knowledge of problems with the Plus 2. They acknowledged the computer had been having problems with compatibility but not with performance.

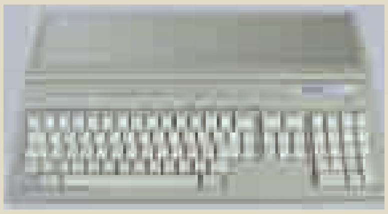
It later transpired that the problems with the batches of Boots machines were actually something very simple. The "performance defect" was poorly aligned tape-heads on the cassette deck causing, rather unsurprisingly, no software to load.

Thankfully, for Amstrad not a major fault and something easily fixed. However, the press coverage combined with the software sales slump news didn't give Amstrad the forward momentum it was looking for coming into the Christmas sales period.

Amstrad were hoping for better things in the US market with the impending launch of its new PC the PC1512. It had tried several times to break into the American computing market with the CPC464 and 6128, as well as the PCW8256. Unfortunately, the machines didn't make an impact. Time would show that the PC1512 would also fail to make an impression.

Atari were hopeful that its new machine, the Atari 520STFM featuring a built-in disc drive, would be available in the shops before Christmas, although the numbers of machines available would be extremely limited. With just a few hundred machines readily available, Christmas gamers would be hard pushed to find a machine, let alone buy one. However, come January, the new ST would be available in abundance.

Mikro-Gen, software house stalwart since the pioneering days of the ZX81 and the producer of the *Wally Week* series of games, announced that it had been bought-out by another software house, namely – Creative Sparks.



» The new ST from Atari had a built-in disc drive and bidet (not really).



» They may have succumbed to a great big wedge of cash but who could forget some of Mikro-Gen's finest moments.

Creative Sparks, had been very active over the previous months acquiring companies involved in various facets of the software world including publishing, training and distribution, felt its controlling hand should benefit the Mikro-Gen label and increase its future output.

After last month's launch of the budget software house Codemasters by the Darling brothers, it immediately followed up its debut releases with 12 further titles including the multiformat release of *BMX Simulator*, which later proved to be a top-selling title for the fledgling company.

Jet Set Willy 2 and *Harvey Smith Showjumper*, both originally by Software Projects, both got a belated compilation release for Christmas on… wait for it… the Tatung Einstein. Lordy me, whatever next? *OutRun* on the ZX81? In fact, it should be noted that both games turned out to be very competent conversions.

Firebird's sister company, Rainbird, announced that its newest project was nearing completion. The Atari ST version of



» One of Codemasters' early hits, *BMX Simulator*, saw you ride (and crash) your bike as frequently as in real life.



» Rainbird's newest release, *Starglider*, proved to be a roaring success on virtually every format it was released on.



» Kevin Tom's, beard-wearing Torquay United supporter, had turned cartoon dictator in this Addictive advert for his new game, *President*.

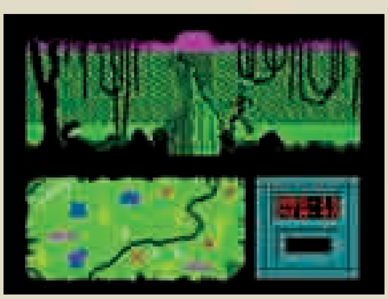
Starglider looked to be the first version to be finished with an imminent pre-release Christmas release looming. Several 8-bit conversions were to follow.

Kevin Toms, he of the beard and head honcho at Addictive Games, revealed that his newest strategy game would be entitled *President*. In it you get to run your very own country, prevent famine, protect it from the invading hordes and generally attempt to keep the country running whilst attempting to win the next election. A pre-Christmas release was planned and when it did arrive, some sections of the computing press didn't warm to it in the same way as his classic football sim.

Football Manager itself was undergoing yet another renaissance by receiving a long overdue conversion and release for the MSX.

Gordon's alive! Yes indeedy, he's been digitised, pixelated and stuck on a £2.99 budget release from Mastertronic, which was due in the shops before the end of December. *Flash Gordon*, the game, sees our hero battle through three levels to finally take on and attempt to defeat archenemy Ming the Merciless. He'll also, apparently, save every one of us…

US Gold announced that the long-awaited conversion of the arcade classic *Gauntlet* was ready for impending release, much to the excitement of the gaming masses. The first completed version was the Amstrad CPC, which looked superb and played very well



» *Flash Gordon*, newly licensed and newly released, attempts to negotiate a rather imposing gash in the road.



» Potions, poison food, transporters, generators, ghostly beings… no, not your local supermarket but US Gold's splendid *Gauntlet*.

indeed. Virtually all 8-bit and 16-bit machines would be catered for after a slight delay to the release schedule. Thankfully, most conversions would be in the shops in time for Christmas.

However, there was a bit of bad news for US Gold in the form of Microprose. The two companies had been enjoying a very beneficial software alliance with US Gold selling many of Microprose's titles in the UK. Microprose now felt it was time to go it alone.

The Microprose brand had become well established in the UK software market and the company believed that it could now support and promote its own titles without the guidance of US Gold. The two software houses parted company on amicable terms, with the split taking effect from the beginning of January.

Tucked away in this month's Newsfield magazines were adverts for a forthcoming new lifestyle magazine from the same publisher. Although a bit of a departure for the company, the new magazine, entitled LM, would be available early in the New Year. Would it be an outright roaring success or an albatross of company-breaking proportions? More on LM next month…

There was sad news from the BBC (the company, not the computer) when it announced that it would be axing its computer-based television show, *Micro*



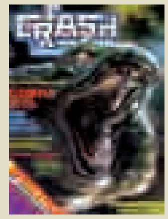
» The Microprose/US Gold partnership may have ended but they certainly created some interesting and playable sims.



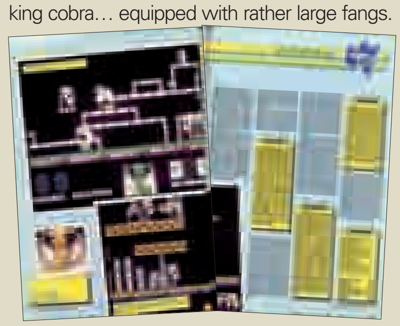
» **Left:** Whether it stood for Lifestyle Monthly or Lloyd Mangram, LM was going to be a pretty big gamble for Newsfield.

THIS MONTH IN…

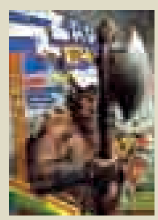
Crash Flash



With a game based on the Sly Stallone movie, *Cobra*, being reviewed and receiving a Crash Smash, you would be forgiven for expecting to see the big man on the cover of Crash Issue 35. Instead, you get yourself an actual king cobra… equipped with rather large fangs.



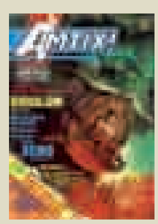
Zzap! Back



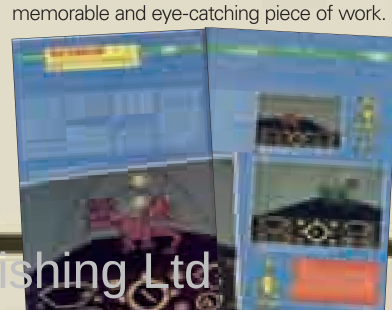
The cover of issue 20 of Zzap!64 paid homage to the impending release of the arcade conversion of *Gauntlet* by US Gold. With a barbarian slashing his way through the cover with an axe, it was a certainly a different angle to take, but one that worked really well.



Amtix! Antics

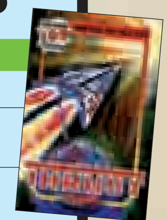


Fantasy art was prominent on Amtix! Issue 14 with Accolade-winning game *The Eidolon* providing the cover this month. With a ship pursued by a dragon with a view to turning you into a flame-grilled whopper, it was a memorable and eye-catching piece of work.



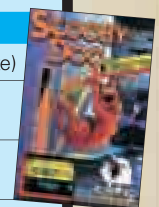
CHARTS

DEC 1986



AMSTRAD

1. Thrust (Firebird)
2. Speed King (Mastertronic)
3. The Apprentice (Mastertronic)
4. Kane (Mastertronic)
5. Trivial Pursuit (Domark)



SPECTRUM

1. Scooby Doo (Elite)
2. Trivial Pursuit (Domark)
3. Konami Coin Op Hits (Imagine)
4. 180 (Mastertronic)
5. Ollie & Lissa (Firebird)



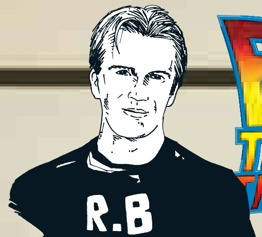
COMMODORE 64

1. Trivial Pursuit (Domark)
2. Super Cycle (Epyx/US Gold)
3. Speed King (Mastertronic)
4. Paperboy (Elite)
5. Konami's Coin Op Hit (Imagine)

MUSIC SINGLES CHART DEC '86

1. The Final Countdown (Europe)
2. Sometimes (Erasure)
3. Caravan Of Love (The Housemartins)
4. The Rain (Oran "Juice" Jones)
5. Livin' On A Prayer (Bon Jovi)







» Ian McNaught-Davis informs us that the electro-static build up in his polyester suit could be enough to power an Acorn Electron for six months.

Live. Featuring former *Play School* and *Choc-A-Block* presenter Fred Harris and Ian McNaught-Davis, *Micro Live* would be finally wound-up after the current series had run its course, sometime into the New Year. Boooooo!

With Christmas just around the corner and with oodles of potential games to spend your festive wonga on, for many, the first, essential, port of call was the newsstand at John Menzies. Grab yourself a magazine and get some pointers towards gaming excellence…

Crash readers had plenty to be cheery about after having seven Crash Smashes lavished upon. They were *The Great Escape* (Ocean), *Uridium* (Hewson), *Firelord* (Hewson), *Twice Shy* (Mosaic), *Cobra* (Ocean), *Druid* (Firebird) and *Thanatos* (Durell).

Zzap!64 readers were also spoiled rotten with two Gold Medal-winning games this month. The fantastically original and still superb, *The Sentinel* (Firebird) was joined by the Boulderdash Construction Kit (First Star/Databyte) for top honours.

The Christmas Sizzlers were *The Sacred Armour Of Antiriad* (Palace Software), *Leather Goddesses Of Phobos* (Infocom), *The Pawn* (Magnetic Scrolls/Rainbird), *Bobby Bearing* (The Edge) and *Trailblazer* (Gremlin Graphics).



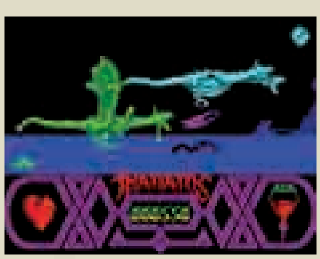
» Under the cover of darkness, your man is spotted taking a wee behind the guard's quarters. Ugh… smells of Sugar Puffs…



» A great game by Hewson with pretty graphics and testing gameplay.



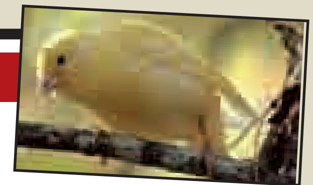
» Tough guy huh? Rubber ducks, hamburgers, prams and girls with rocket launchers?



» *Double Dragon*? No, it's Crash Smash winning game *Thanatos* by Durell.

1986

DECEMBER NEWS



» A canary. They sniff gas and die, so that coal miners don't have to. Now neither of them has jobs.

With advances in technology and the introduction of electronic carbon monoxide detectors, 30 December saw the sad news that canaries were to be phased out from working down coalmines.

With their ultra-sensitivity to pollutants in the air that could otherwise go undetected by man, the canaries were an important part of mining history and were invaluable when faced with gas leaks… and yes, this is 1986 not 1886.

11 December saw miffed church leaders in the UK taking offence at the new slogan created for BBC radio, which was aimed at raising AIDS awareness. And the oh-so offensive phrase that upset everyone? Play Safe.

Apparently, this was supposedly promoting promiscuity and "encouraged a flippant attitude towards sexual relationships". The government had also started its own AIDS campaign which introduced the famous "AIDS: Don't die of ignorance" tagline and the big black tombstone graphic.



» Big, scary and as much a part of the Eighties as New Romantic bands and leg warmers.

14 December saw the first successful non-stop flight around the world without refuelling. The flight took just over 216 hours covering almost 25,000 miles. The plane, Voyager, weighed 4400 kilograms on take-off with the fuel load accounting for almost 4000 kilograms. Sadly, there was no in-flight entertainment or duty free trolley.



» Balls. Bouncy balls. Down a road with big holes in it. That's *Trailblazer* that is. Brick hard too.

Last, and most certainly least, we come to *Robobolt* (Alpha Omega) which claimed the game-most-resembling-a-cowpat award with it receiving an exceedingly impressive 3% overall. Good work gents.

Amstradians were treated to a Christmas feast of Amtix! Accolades with *The Eidolon* (Activision/Lucasfilm), *Trailblazer* (Gremlin Graphics), *Scooby Doo* (Elite), *Leather Goddesses Of Phobos* (Infocom), *Xeno* (A&F Software), *Ikari Warriors* (Elite), and, the compilation *Amtix! Accolades* (Star Games) notching up an award.

However, there was one overcooked sprout in this Christmas dinner of delights. *Danger Mouse In Making Whoopee* (Creative Sparks) received a paltry 14%. Crikey DM!

Computer & Video Games must have had a happy band of reviewers over the Christmas period with no less than three Games of the Month and 18 other titles receiving the C&VG Hit award. Good will to all men and software houses apparently!

The C&VG Games of the Month were *Scooby Doo* (Elite, Spectrum), *The Sacred Armour Of Antiriad* (Palace Software, C64) and *Firelord* (Hewson, Spectrum).



» The *Amtix Accolades* compilation receiving an Amtix! Accolade in Amtix! magazine? That said, it was rather good…



» Air hockey meets *Pong* in a simplistic, yet strangely addictive little game.

The 18 C&VG Hits were *Sanxion* (Thalamus, C64), *Hacker* (Activision, C64), *The Great Escape* (Ocean, Spectrum), *Ace Of Aces* (US Gold/Accolade, C64), *TT Racer* (Digital Integration, Spectrum), *The Trap Door* (Piranha, Amstrad), *Crystal Castles* (US Gold, BBC), *Bombscare* (Firebird, Spectrum), *Lightforce* (FTL, Spectrum), *Storm* (Mastertronic, Spectrum), *KWAH!* (Melbourne House, Spectrum), *Hardball* (Advance, Spectrum), *Tass Times* (Activision, C64), *Uridium* (Hewson, Spectrum), *Fist II* (Melbourne House, C64), *Olli And Lissa* (Firebird, Spectrum) and *Nexor* (Design Design, Amstrad).

COMBAT SCHOOL

"I WANNA BE YOUR DRILL INSTRUCTOR"



- **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- **RELEASED:** 1987
- **GENRE:** ACTION
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £50+ FOR AN ORIGINAL PCB BOARD



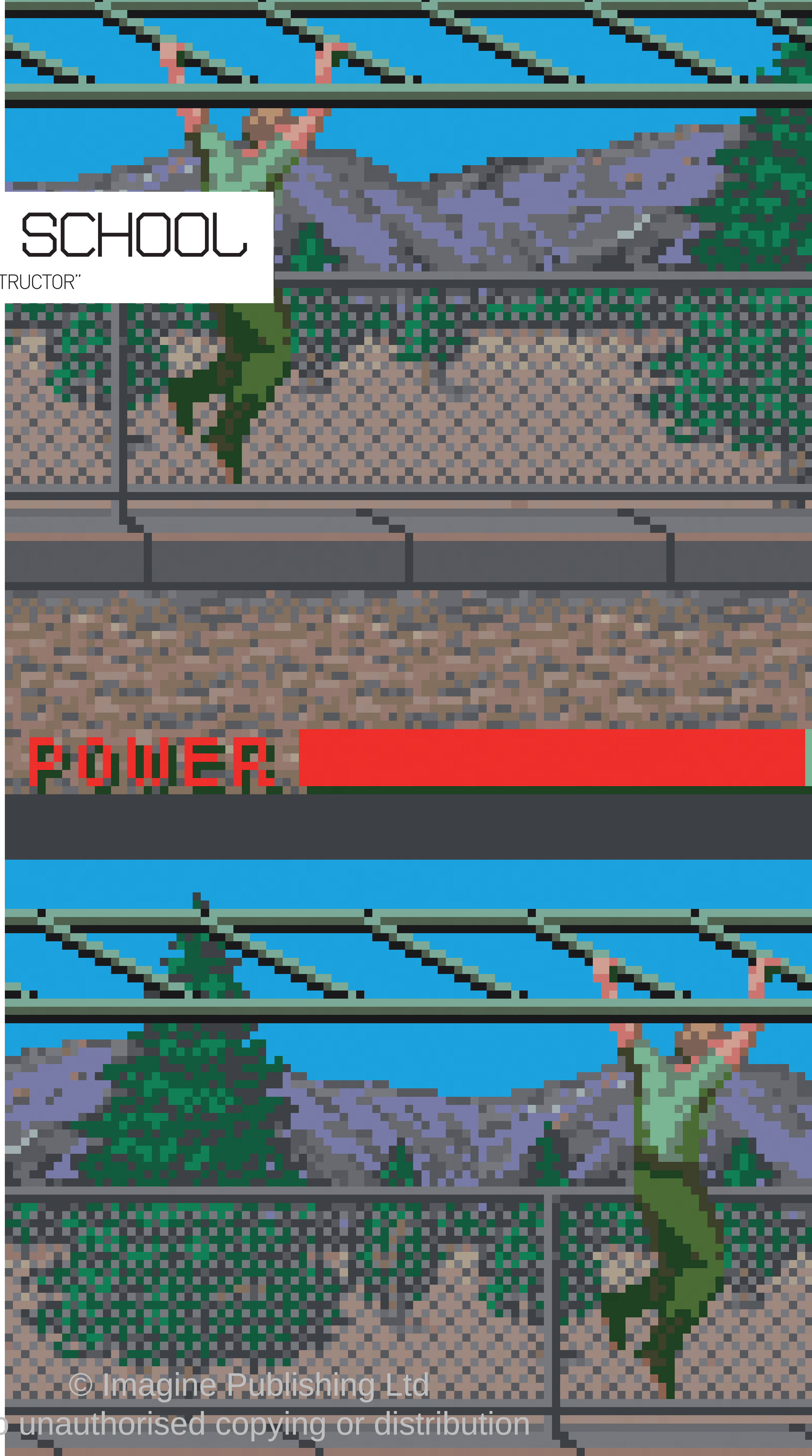
HISTORY

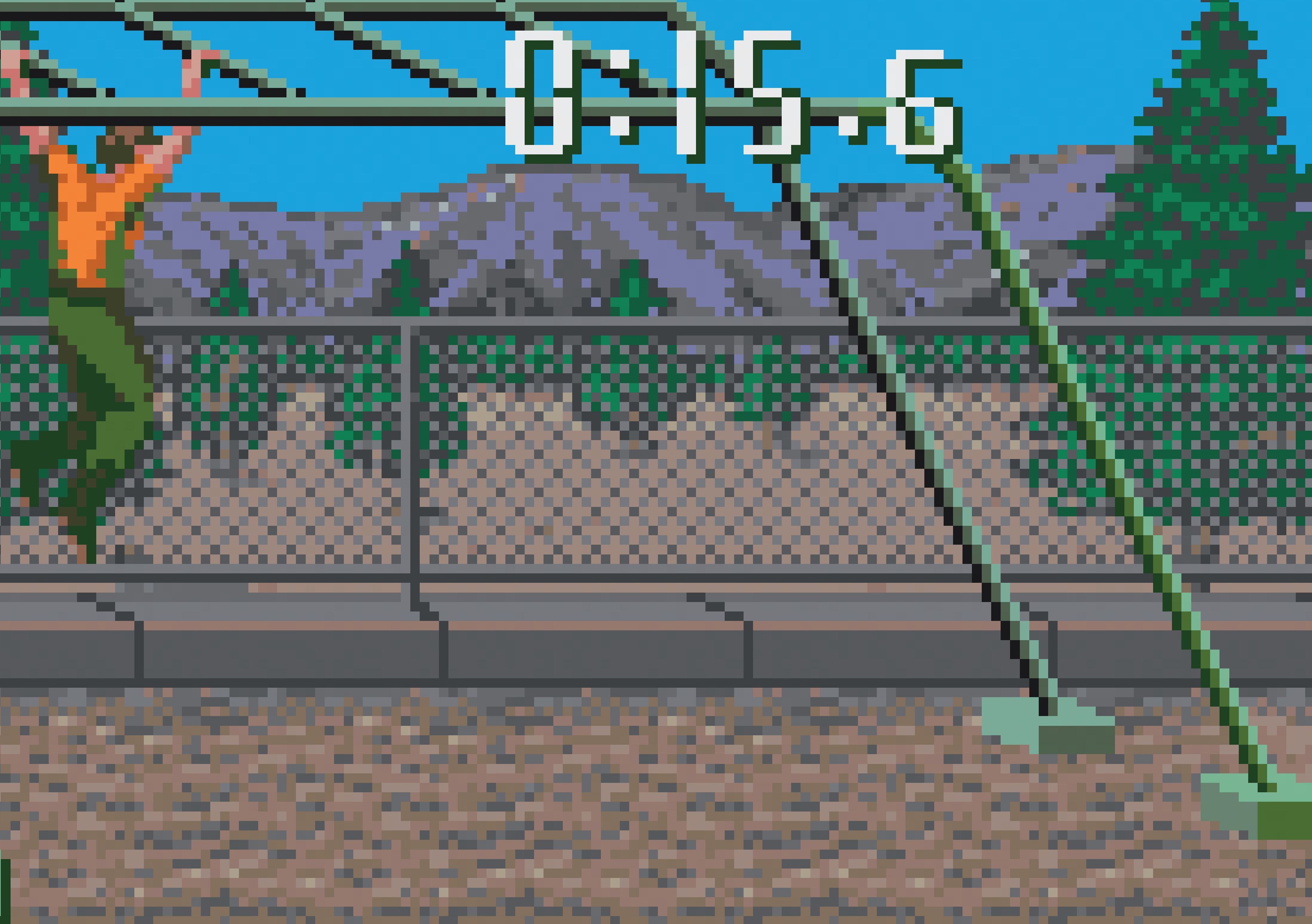
Few games left you as physically shattered as Konami's *Combat School*. First released in arcades back in 1987 and sporting a trackball (although a joystick kit was eventually released as well) *Combat School* was a gruelling, demanding title that left even the best player exhausted by the time they'd reached its end. But then, considering *Combat School*'s subject matter this was hardly surprising.

For you see, *Combat School* was essentially a spiritual successor to such Konami hits as *Track & Field* and *Hyper Sports*, only this time around javelin throwing, swimming and skeet shooting had been replaced by obstacle courses, iron man races and firing ranges. Oh, and you were no longer competing in the Olympics, you were doing you're best to stay in the army before you were dishonourably discharged, by a digital Lee Emery stand-in, for being a wuss. Successfully complete all the events and you'd get a stab at an awful Green Beret style bonus level, fail and the instructor would either force you to do chin-ups in the game's bonus round or simply tell you to "go home to your mother."

Unlike *Track & Field* and *Hyper Sports* which relied on good ole fashioned button bashing in order to make progress, *Combat School* required you to use a trackball. Fine when you wanted to do extremely precise shooting on the three different firing ranges, but a real pain in the arse when you were using it for more physical demands. Indeed, the frantic trackball spinning could be so intense that you could easily trap the skin in the palm of your hand and cause a nasty pinch if you weren't being too careful. Ouch!

Potential hand injuries aside, *Combat School* proved to be a big enough hit to entice Ocean to release some fairly competent home conversions back in 1987. If only all the long hours waggling my joystick hadn't convinced my mum that I'd been up to something else…




0:15.6



THE MAKING OF...

Prince of Persia

Swords, puzzles and fluid, lifelike movements – Prince Of Persia was undeniably a ground-breaking game. As one of the very best two dimensional platformers of all time, the game gained a horde of fans and was recently resurrected by Ubisoft. Creator Jordan Mechner talks to David Crookes about his landmark game.



» The original version of *Prince Of Persia* began life on the Apple II, the computer Jordan Mechner received as a 15-year-old.

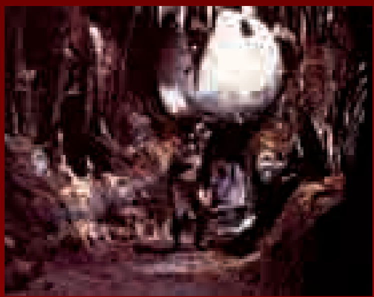
When *Prince Of Persia* appeared on the Apple II computer, it was without undue fanfare from the media or even the publishers themselves. The game that would - within days of its debut - establish itself as the foremost master of platform-adventure puzzlers of its time was launched with a whimper quite at odds with what was an expansive, graphically superlative title.

That it went on to become one of the most ported games in history is testament to its strengths. For this was a game in which the stunning animation of the Prince himself was more than matched by what was an addictive, and at times frustrating, exploration adventure with a fair bit of hacking and slashing thrown in for good measure.

Prince Of Persia was created by Jordan Mechner, an up-and-coming programmer born in New York City. Although he had created a game while at Yale University – an action romp called *Karateka* in 1984 – he did not particularly have ambitions to become a great game designer. As a child, he had surrounded himself with comic books and animation and these were his first loves. So it followed that when his parents bought him an Apple II computer, Mechner, who was 15 at the time, preferred to use it to create animation, although he did knock out an *Asteroids* rip-off called *Deathbounds* which he submitted, without success, to Brøderbund.



This passion for animation showed starkly in *Karateka* – a game which made its debut on the Apple II and sold 500,000 copies on various formats. It was Mechner's first game and it revolved around the player rescuing princess Mariko from the clutches of evil lord Akuma. The player had to work towards the princess' dungeon cell, seeing off numerous soldiers along the way.



» The first ten minutes of *Indiana Jones: Raiders Of The Lost Ark* was the inspiration for *Prince Of Persia*.

But although this game is not particularly well known despite its success, it was, in hindsight, a vital component of the *Prince Of Persia* phenomena. One of the more notable aspects of *Karateka* was the fluid and realistic way in which the main sprites were animated – something Mechner had perfected over the years while honing his animation skills.

But when it came to creating his second game, the main challenge for Mechner, who began working on *Prince Of Persia* almost immediately after completing *Karateka*, was to find a completely fresh angle. And then the idea for *Prince Of Persia* struck him.

"Swords," he laughs. "I'd just done *Karateka* which was a hand-to-hand fighting game, so I was pretty sure swords would work well."

He then switched on the television.

Jordan is a huge fan of films and it was to this medium that he turned when thinking about how his new game was going to evolve.

In particular, he was struck by *Indiana Jones* and felt the concepts behind the Spielberg blockbuster classic would translate well into a game. This movie would become the backbone of the game and for the next four years,Jordan would toil at his keyboard to create it – bringing his love of animation to the fore.

"The first ten minutes of *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* was an inspiration to me," he says. "During this period of time, Indiana Jones has to get from point A to point B and back again while narrowly escaping getting crushed, spiked or impaled.

"I wanted to get that kind of visceral quality to the action in *Prince Of Persia*. This way you would feel the character isn't just a weightless sprite, but a real flesh-and-blood person.

"If you try to jump across a chasm and just miss, you can still save yourself by

"I WANTED TO GET THAT VISCERAL QUALITY. THE WAY YOU WOULD FEEL THAT THE CHARACTER ISN'T JUST A WEIGHTLESS SPRITE, BUT A REAL FLESH-AND-BLOOD PERSON"

IN THE KNOW



» **PUBLISHER:** DOMARK/ BRØDERBUND

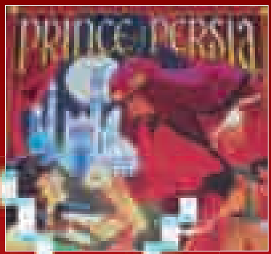
» **DEVELOPER:** JORDAN MECHNER

» **RELEASED:** 1989

» **GENRE:** ARCADE ADVENTURE

» **FORMATS:** APPLE II, APPLE MACINTOSH, DOS, AMIGA, ATARI ST, MASTER SYSTEM, SEGA MEGA-CD, GAME BOY, GAME BOY COLOUR, NES, SNES, SAM COUPÉ, AMSTRAD CPC, ZX SPECTRUM, GAME GEAR, TURBO DUO, MEGA DRIVE/GENESIS

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** AROUND £5



THE MAKING OF... PRINCE OF PERSIA



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

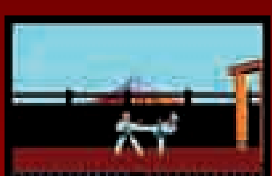
KARATEKA
SYSTEMS: AMSTRAD CPC, APPLE II, ATARI 800XL, ATARI 7800, COMMODORE 64, DOS, FAMICOM, ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR: 1984

PRINCE OF PERSIA 2: THE SHADOW AND THE FLAME
SYSTEMS: PC, MAC, SNES. A MEGA DRIVE VERSION WAS NOT RELEASED.
YEAR: 1993

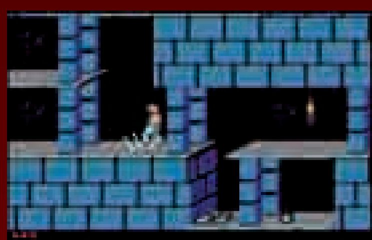
THE LAST EXPRESS
SYSTEMS: PC AND MAC
YEAR: 1997

PRINCE OF PERSIA 3D
PC AND SEGA DREAMCAST
YEAR: 1999

PRINCE OF PERSIA: THE SANDS OF TIME
SYSTEMS: XBOX, GAMECUBE, PS2, PC, GAME BOY ADVANCE, MOBILE PHONE
YEAR: 2003



» *Karateka* was Mechner's first published game, and a precursor to *Prince Of Persia*.



» Mind yourself! Prince edges his way over some spikes.

grabbing the ledge with your hands, and struggling to pull yourself up – and if you fall on the spikes, you feel like that would really hurt."

One of the key aspects of *Prince Of Persia* became the movement of the main character. Prince was able to leap gaps with majestic grace, grab the edge of ledges if the jump was mistimed and nimbly use his sword against all manner of foes. Whether he was taking careful, almost stealthy, steps over a perilous range of spikes or edging his way to the end of a platform before throwing up his arms at a ledge above and pulling himself up to safety, the Prince displayed all of the nuances of movement you would expect of a real person. Mechner's dream – and hours of animation experience – was becoming a reality.

Much of it was due to Mechner using a technique called rotoscoping which is when animators trace live action movement frame by frame for use in animation. Mechner asked his brother, David, to run, jump and squat while wearing white clothes similar to that of the Prince. Jordan filmed him and took photographs. He took the movies he had created and digitised them into his computer and then spent weeks studying the resulting footage, ensuring he fully understood the nuances of human agility, translating them into frames for Prince's movement. It ensured the hero of *Prince Of Persia* had incredibly fluid animation and Mechner, who was 25 by the time the game was released in 1989, was being lauded as a graphical genius.

He explains: "Rotoscoping was a technique I first used in *Karateka* and it's basically something animators have been doing since the very early days of film in the 1900s.

"For *Prince Of Persia*, I videotaped my brother running, jumping, and doing lots of other things, then went through a process to select frames and transfer them in silhouette to the computer.

"The hard part then, as now, was to integrate the animations into the game in a way that struck the right balance between responsive controls, and fluid animations that look good visually – it's always a trade off. It took a lot of tweaking."

Of course, we have long known that gameplay is more important than graphics and Mechner certainly understood this too. Although *Prince Of Persia* was visually stunning, making some 8-bit machines look close to their 16-bit successors, and almost single-handedly propping up sales of the Sam Coupe, Mechner ensured the game would be an enjoyable romp.

First of all, he imbued the 13-level game with a rather corny, faux-historical yet tried-and-tested plot. An entangled web of love and power, it told the tale of jealous Jaffar, the Grand Vizier of Persia who was ruling the land with an iron fist

With his eye on taking the throne permanently while the Sultan was absent, leading his army to a huge battle in foreign lands, Jaffar realised the only thing that stood in his way was the Sultan's daughter – so he offered her a worrying ultimatum: "Marry me or die."

Setting a time limit of an hour and handily providing her with an egg timer to count down the minutes, Jaffar fairly dramatically waltzed away, leaving the princess to ponder what was certainly a very life or death position.

But there was light on the horizon however. The princess was in love with a brave young man and this worried Jaffar who had him thrown into jail. But that man was determined to escape to rescue his beloved princess. And that is where the player came in...

"The *Prince Of Persia* story came out of a desire to find a visually distinctive setting that wasn't already familiar from

"I VIDEOTAPED MY BROTHER RUNNING, JUMPING, AND DOING LOTS OF OTHER THINGS, THEN WENT THROUGH A PROCESS TO SELECT FRAMES AND TRANSFER THEM IN SILHOUETTE TO THE COMPUTER"



other games," Jordan comments. "A lot of games had sci-fi or medieval, sword and sorcery settings.

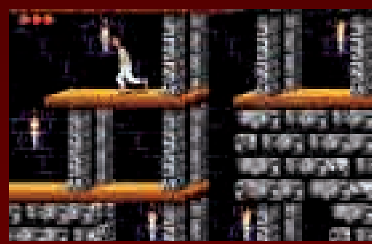
"But the "1001 Nights" theme hadn't been done in a long time – this was a few years before Disney's *Aladdin*. And it was a good fit for the kind of character I wanted to create – your basic plucky underdog who's totally outnumbered and outgunned by the villains, but still hangs in there and gets the girl."

Mechner's love of the Apple II meant *Prince Of Persia* made its debut on this machine, complete with its four-colour scheme. Mechner gave the game a cinematic feel with its opening credits. The entertaining cartoon intros showed Vizier delivering his ultimatum to the Princess, the story being explained by silent-movie style written cards. It then cut to the game itself, catching up with Prince just as he manages to escape from his jail cell. The cell door slams shut behind him and then it's up to the player to guide the Prince through the first set of screens which made up the very first level.

At this point, the Prince had just three life potions and needed, rather urgently, to find his sword. It felt linear for the first two levels but then you began to realise the depth. The levels became lengthier and the guards more difficult.

Two things were noticeable. First of all, the frustrating nature of the gameplay and second that the game was a flick-screen, rather than a scroller.

"Flipping screens was a technical limitation," says Mechner. "To smoothly scroll that much graphic information would have been way beyond the capacity of most systems at that time. But given that, I tried to design levels in a way that would make a virtue of necessity, designing each screen as a kind of unit in the player's experience."



» The Master System version of *Prince of Persia* is particularly impressive and still looks great today.



» *Prince Of Persia*'s Mega Drive version was the most detailed.

Each of these "units" had their own challenges. The first encounter with a wobbly floor that gave way, sending you plummeting to a lost life, became a shock. The first meeting with one of the Vizier's guards that left you helplessly sprawled on the floor made you furiously seek revenge. The first moment you missed a ledge and slipped to your death almost made you put down your joystick.

But then you found yourself wanting to keep going. The wobbly floor collapsed, so you pushed up and Prince held on for dear life. You grabbed your sword and grappled successfully with the guards. You missed the ledge but somehow managed to swing your way to safety.

Then you realised the game required you to have immense patience and an eye for precision. And you also noticed that Prince would die – many, many times. You just had to get over it.

But not everything in the game required hand-eye co-ordination. Much of it was about thought. The crazy jumps and incredible acrobatic manoeuvres aside, *Prince Of Persia* was more about standing

UP IN LIGHTS

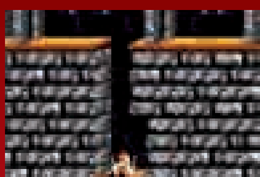
Prince of Persia is set to become the star of a Hollywood film. Jordan Mechner wrote the initial script and *The Day After Tomorrow* writer Jeffrey Nachmanoff has worked on subsequent drafts.

The movie is to be released in 2008 with Jerry Bruckheimer said to be producing.

Will there be any references to the original *Prince Of Persia* – the Shadow Man, perhaps? Jordan says: "I think the key to the success of each new incarnation of *Prince Of Persia* – and this goes for the graphic novel as well as the movie that is in the works – is to take the approach that each one must succeed as a lively, original creation on its own terms, not just as an adaptation of something that came before." He says elements will be taken from all of the games and used to craft a new story.



» A sword to the throat, there is only one thing about to happen to the prince. He will die.



» Oh no, Prince has died. Again. Frustratingly, dying was an occupational hazard.



» The story of *Prince Of Persia* was told at the beginning of the game in a neat animation. It began by telling the player about the Grand Vizier's plans to take the throne, impeded only by the princess. It then shows the princess in her room as Jaffar walks in, issues his ultimatum ("Marry me or die"), hands her an egg-timer and nips off for an hour.



BONUS!

The 2003 release of *Prince Of Persia: The Sands Of Time* was a prequel to the original game, created with just the one character, the prince himself. And just as Jordan Mechner was influenced by the film *Raiders Of The Lost Ark* for the original, he drew inspiration from Hong Kong action movies, films from Korea and China and *Crouching Tiger Hidden Dragon* for the second game. "These movies obviously inspired the *Matrix* as well so there is a lot of cross-pollination going on," he said. "The fascination of seeing characters do things that are pushed beyond the limits of what you can do in real life but done in such a way that it feels part of a believable universe is what fascinates me." *Sands Of Time* also came with a little extra – the original *PoP*, allowing a new generation the chance to try the game. For details of how to unlock it, try a Google search to find the many cheat sites out there.



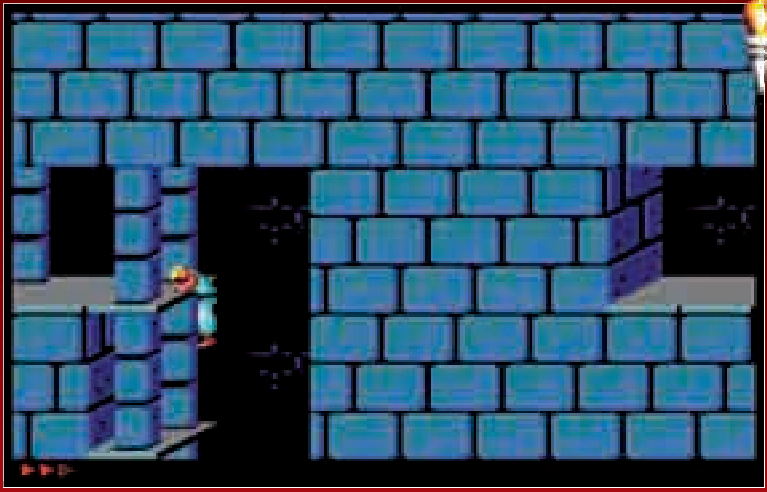
» The sword fighting was inspired by the climactic fight in *Robin Hood* (1938) between Errol Flynn and Basil Rathbone.

on switches to open doors, whilst carefully avoiding the buttons which closed them again before you got to the opening. It was also about working out and remembering where the collapsing floors and razor sharp traps were located – all as the clock continued to tick down.

Jordan wanted to make sure that the game was developed with the Prince's animations and abilities in mind. So the level design was created in such a way that it would make a fun playground for the Prince to run on. Mechner also had to think about allowing the player to build the necessary skills needed in order to work through each level in a reasonable order, ensuring the game got progressively harder but not in a way that would stump people and prevent them from wanting to progress.

And then there was the sword fighting. Once you had found your sword in the first level, the beautiful clink of metal as you used your fast reflexes to battle against dozens of guards felt wonderfully fresh, certainly a nice departure from using a gun or fist. Knowing when to strike your opponent or defend against his attack required real thought. Sometimes you could leap past them – more often than not, though, they would cut you down. Luckily, dotted around the place were potions which gave you some energy back.

So how did Mechner achieve the intensity and realism of the swordfighting?



» Prince's athleticism could be seen at various stages of the game. Here he does some pull-ups.

"I wanted to get that back-and-forth, classic Hollywood-swordfighting feel, where the blades clash high and low in a kind of balletic rhythm," he says. "The model was the climactic fight, in the 1938 film version of *Robin Hood*, between Errol Flynn and Basil Rathbone. If you play the DVD in freeze-frame, you can spot the animation frames I used for *Prince Of Persia*."

The sheer difficulty of some of the levels – and the severity of many of the guards – meant the game was incredibly hard at times. Missing a jump or plummeting to your death was easy to do and losing concentration in a sword fight and getting killed was all too frequent as well, throwing you straight back to the beginning of the level. Although it had, in a sense, infinite lives, the strict timer meant there was little time to waste.

One of the lovely quirks to the game was the moment the Prince jumped through a mirror. His shadow separated from his body and then irritatingly showed up from time to time until you battled with it in the final stages of the game, forcing it to reunite with your body.

"The shadow man came out of a technical limitation," says Jordan. "The game really demanded a worthy opponent for the Prince who was capable of running and jumping – who was athletic – but I'd filled up the Apple II's memory with the Prince animation frames and simply didn't have the space for a new character.

"By bit-shifting the Prince frames and exclusive-oring with itself, I could create a ghostly shimmering outline.

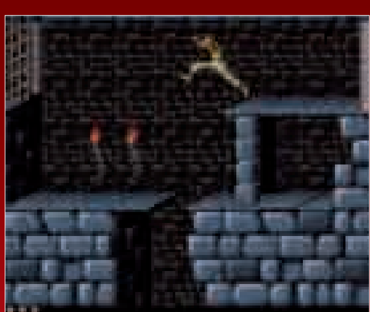


"One look at the character himself and his name immediately suggested itself – Shadow Man!

"So then it was just a question of creating a story justification as to why this being existed, so I could put him in the game. Hence the mirror."

Following the Apple II's debut, the game was soon ported to other machines, including the PC, Atari ST and Amiga. The major difference was the increase in the number of colours – now up to 256, making the Prince's world just a tad brighter. On the Apple Macintosh, the game benefited from high-resolution graphics. The Prince sprite bore a turban and it is this version which you get for free as a bonus on the Xbox's *Prince Of Persia: Sands Of Time*.

The Amstrad CPC version was also applauded by critics. Amstrad Action's Frank O'Connor said it was "one of the best Amstrad games ever" and awarded it 95 per cent. He also gave the graphics 98 per cent, saying the game had "some of the best animation you'll ever see – truly gobsmacking visuals." In 1992, the game also did wonders for the Sam Coupe, the ill-fated Spectrum spin-off, becoming a landmark title for the machine and really showing what the computer was capable of. However, this was not an official conversion – it had been copied pixel-by-pixel by a programmer called Chris White from the Amiga version and rebuilt on the Sam Coupe. Domark, which released the game in the UK on behalf of Brøderbund, was only showed the game upon its completion but thought it of high enough quality to snap it up.



» The SNES version had a time limit of two hours. More time to die.

But Jordan's favourite version and the system that was the most challenging was the Mac port. "It was programmed by Scott Shumway of Presage Software," explains Jordan. "He went all out, including implementing multiple graphic sets so the game could be played not just in black and white on the original, small Mac screen, but in colour on the newer large-screen Macs.

"Because of his high standards and attention to detail, the port took two years longer than originally planned.

"The delay actually turned out to be a good thing, because by the time the game was released in 1992, there was a real Mac market that was hungry for games they could play on their new colour screens, and *Prince Of Persia* became the number-one-selling Mac game.

"Everyone was surprised that the Mac version of *Prince Of Persia* actually outsold the PC version; the conventional wisdom was that the Mac was a tiny, insignificant portion of the gaming market.

"The Mac version of *Prince Of Persia* created a level of buzz that the game had never had before.

"I think it was a key factor in the game finally becoming a hit, more than two years after its original release."

The game was not confined to computers, however. Consoles including the NES, Gameboy and Gameboy Colour received ports. And Sega's machines were not left out, with the Master System and GameGear seeing the benefits of the game, albeit with strange animation. The Mega Drive upped the ante with incredibly detailed graphics. A "fast" option was included on the Sega CD version letting you speed through completed levels or slow down during sword fights. On the SNES, the game was expanded, offering 20 levels instead of 13 and lengthening existing ones. The time limit was doubled from 60 to 120 minutes.

Prince Of Persia went on to sell two million copies overall and has since spawned a franchise. So what does Jordan think of the progression of the series?

"I worked closely with Ubisoft Montreal on its first *Prince Of Persia* title, *Sands Of Time*. We didn't think of the game as a sequel or a remake, but rather as a new original game.

"The whole team knew that to create a console game in 2003 that would recapture the spirit and excitement of the 1989 *Prince Of Persia*, meant having to start from scratch and devise a new story and gameplay experience that would be different in nearly all the particulars – starting with the basic gameplay rules, like using water and sand instead of potions."

He added: "To keep innovating and avoid artistic stagnation, it's essential to give yourself the creative freedom to take risks and try things that may or may not work, rather than try too hard to be faithful. When I look back, creative freedom has been my hallmark."

MR PRINCE

Throughout this article, the main character has been Prince. But surely he had a name? "We are waiting for him to tell us," laughs Jordan.

Whether or not he will gain a name in time for the film remains to be seen but why is he nameless?

"It corresponds to the kind of tradition of 1001 Nights tales," says Jordan, referring to stories collected around the 13th century which have ancient origins from many countries including Persia. "In these stories, all characters have a name, except for the Prince who is always referred to as 'the King's son.

"It was more appropriate and straightforward to have Prince called by his title, instead of giving him a name just for the sake of it. It adds mystery."



» Jordan Mechner, the creator of *Prince Of Persia*

BOSS/RUSH

WHERE WE SQUARE OFF AGAINST THAT END-OF-LEVEL BADDIE FROM YESTERYEAR…

EVERYTHING IN SEXY PARODIUS

GAME INFO



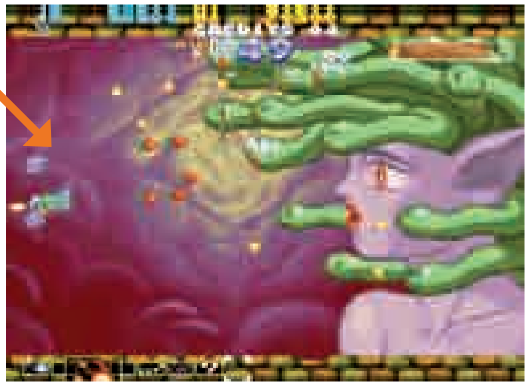
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- » **RELEASED:** 1996
- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **DEVELOPER:** KONAMI



» Parp parp parp! It's a tooting, popping, corn-on-the-cob! At this point we gave up trying to understand.



» Yes, that is a penguin with a toilet on its head. No, Konami refuses to comment on the subject.



» A bunny girl riding on a missile while firing carrots at woman with green snakes for hair. Riiiiight…

You have to admire Konami's *Parodius* series. Originally starting as a parody of *Gradius* it went on to become its own standalone respected series – it also switches off all safety valves and turns the insanity gas up to maximum, while breathing deeply. The 1996 arcade version, *Sexy Parodius*, changes the style slightly but is as demented as past releases: lesbian-themed backgrounds, flying farm animals, naked women doing all manner of things (bathing, flying, trying to kill you, and so on), plus lots and lots of penguins. To dwell on these things anymore is to invite madness! Its bosses meanwhile are so deranged, we couldn't limit ourselves to covering only one. So we've covered them all!

First is a furiously self-popping corn-on-the-cob, which with a wild look in its eye and loud deranged screaming (and tooting), proceeds to create popcorn from its own body. Even this first boss is an intense challenge, with veils of difficult-to-avoid popcorn sailing through the air. But make that flying pig shoot faster, and soon he's toast. And what do we find after this monstrosity has been vanquished? Well, naturally, with a puff of smoke of leaves it turns into a small fox.

Next up is what can only be described as an obese flying penguin with a Japanese-style toilet attached to its head and body. The fights starts with it pulling the flush chain and draining the flooded level. From a spout in the top of his head he also shoots bubbled enemies at you. Avoid them and send a few volley into his gut-sack. Look at his eyes, the rotten pervert.

Stage three has a topless medusa woman complete with a head full of snakes. Shooting her results in not only a wide-eyed look of shock, but what sounds like orgasmic moaning. Keep doing it! Failure to pump her full of lead will result in eye beams which turn you to stone, and therefore a Game Over.

Fail to complete the previous stage's set mission goal, and you're sent to face a massive racoon with an even bigger pair of… Well, just look at the screenshot. Aim for the face and then aim for the jewels, then watch him dance around in pain. It's a lesson for real life actually – rockets to the groin are a great way to get rid of unwanted racoons.

Next should be a quartet of bosses, all in a row. It starts with a pink bird in a pirate costume, which is fairly easy to dispatch. Next is an eagle dressed in the US flag, looking like some kind of presidential candidate; fry his feathers and he turns into a cooked turkey. He's followed by a giant mouth, licking its lips. The grand finalé is against a woman riding a pink clam, the background being a nude blonde.

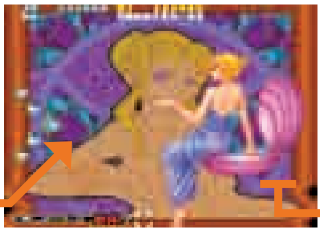
From here the game loses the plot, with a lacklustre battle against some spinning candy. From here though follows the best boss fight in history. You start off chasing a red squid dragging a sack of gold, anticipating the ultimate showdown. Instead a lithe naked woman rolls over, crushing the squid with her buttocks. So ends the game. What the hell?!

It's a fun title worth playing, but remember kids, no substance abuse laws were broken with the development of *Sexy Parodius*.

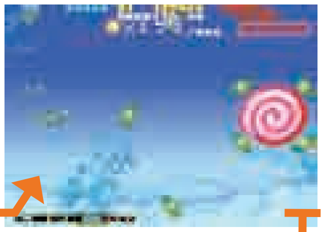
IT'S A LESSON FOR REAL LIFE ACTUALLY – ROCKETS TO THE GROIN ARE A GREAT WAY TO GET RID OF UNWANTED RACOONS



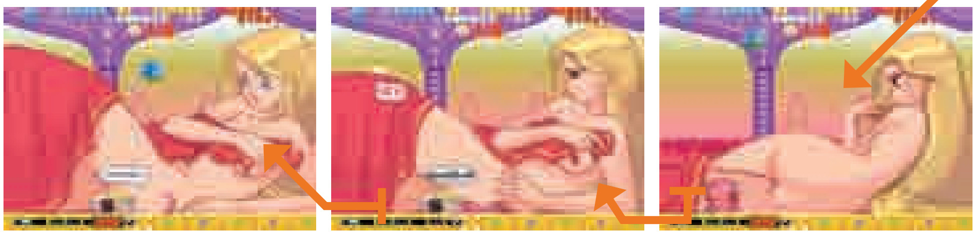
» He doesn't look very comfortable, does he? No sympathy for the devil though; shoot those gonads!



» Mambo, the giant fish, battling against this flying woman. What is it with all the scantily clad ladies?



» It's a giant peppermint candy. No, really, that's all it is. There's nothing wacky going on here.



» Contrary to popular belief, dragging around a sack of gold coins will not result in what's being depicted in these screens. Retro Gamer? More like Top-Shelf-Gamer if articles like this continue.

Before They were Famous

ATARI'S ARCADE DIVISION IN THE EARLY EIGHTIES HAD A LEGEND KNOWN AS THE FRESHMAN JINX. "EVERY FIRST GAME, BY EVERY PROGRAMMER EVER HIRED AT ATARI – INCLUDING ED LOGG – WAS A FAILURE. IF [NEW GAMES] FAILED TO EARN ENOUGH QUARTERS IN THEIR FIRST WEEKS, THEY WOULD BE CANCELLED," EXPLAINED MARK CERNY. NEARLY EVERY GAMING LEGEND STARTED BY CREATING A FLOP. CONVERSELY, A FEW WERE A SUCCESS FIRST TIME ROUND. BUT WHAT SET THEM APART? JOHN SZCZEPANIAK DIGS UP THE PAST, FROM BEFORE THEY WERE FAMOUS, AND SPEAKS TO A FEW LEGENDS.



EARLY GAMES:
Monster Muncher (VIC-20), *Styx*, *The Birds And The Bees*

CLAIM TO FAME:
Manic Miner, *Jet Set Willy* (ZX Spectrum)





MATTHEW SMITH

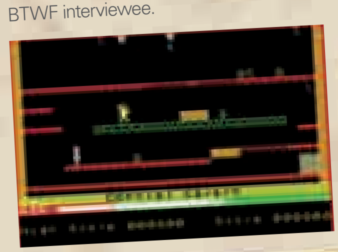
Matthew Smith is something of a poster child for the UK 8-bit micro games scene. Anyone who grew up gaming in the early Eighties should know the name. Curiously though, despite being an iconic figure, it was mainly two of his games which captivated the UK populace – *Manic Miner* and *Jet Set Willy*. But what did he do before he was famous?

His first game was the almost entirely unknown *Monster Muncher*. Smith told Paul Drury in interview once, regarding how the game came about, "I undertook to do the *Monster Muncher* for the Vic 20. I had a 3K RAM Expansion Pack, a tape drive, and VIC 20 BASIC. It was three hours work and we'd got a product."

His next, more successful project, was *Styx* on the ZX Spectrum. According to the Drury interview, this curious 1983 release earned him a massive £300,000. Not bad for a single screen looping maze game; the object is to navigate three sections of a maze, crossing the proverbial Styx of the underworld, before shooting death in the face with a laser. Along the way are various nasties to avoid, like spiders and fish. Another, less well documented, game of Matthew's is *The Birds And The Bees* – a slow-paced pseudo-*Defender*-clone involving the pollinating of flowers.

CLAIM TO FAME

If you've been reading Retro Gamer since the early issues, these two titles should feel like old friends by now. Hugely successful, available across multiple formats, and loved by thousands, the duo of *Miner* platformers made and then broke young Smith. The games also inspired countless other young programmers to create something, as revealed by Martyn Brown, our next BTWF interviewee.





EARLY GAMES:
FOT, *Henry's Hoard*

CLAIM TO FAME:
Founded Team 17





MARTYN BROWN

A little searching will reveal that Team 17 co-founder Martyn Brown started out developing a mostly unknown title, *Henry's Hoard*. Brown spoke openly, "*Henry's Hoard* was a title that myself and a friend from college (Andy Bigos) created in early 1985 and actually it was finished whilst Live Aid was on TV (just after Status Quo, if I recall correctly). We were heavily into Spectrums, were both 17 and it was fashionable at the time to make platform games like *Jet Set Willy*, which were kind of like the FPS of the early Eighties."

Even more interestingly, it wasn't really his first actual game. "I don't think I'd made anything much before that, other than a really rather crude adventure game which only had one room and a bunch of objects, but you could do anything with anything to anything and get some kind of witty, usually sexually kinky or sick gag. The game was called *FOT* and never got released."

Brown seemed surprised though, that anyone would be interested. "It seems very weird now that anyone would want to know what I was doing over 21 years ago, on a Spectrum, in my bedroom. They were hardly world-beaters and pretty average, but I was chuffed at the time. *Henry's Hoard* got a review in Crash (65%) and I still have a copy today – it's been all downhill since then!"

CLAIM TO FAME

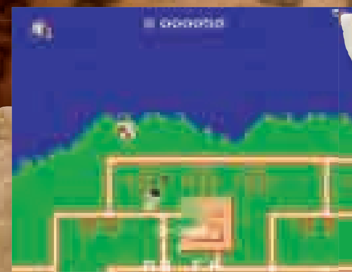
Brown's great claim to fame is of course co-founding Team 17, which went on to create Amiga classics such as *Worms* and *Alien Breed*. "I wouldn't even say that those days were hugely important in terms of what Team 17 did on the Amiga, since I took a break from making games after *Henry's Hoard*, but it's fondly remembered – I have a framed copy, along with a Spectrum in my games dojo at home."



EARLY GAMES: *Raid On Bungeling Bay* (C64, NES, MSX)

CLAIM TO FAME: *SimCity*, *The Sims*





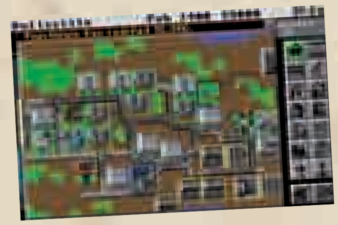
WILL WRIGHT

Technically speaking, *Raid On Bungeling Bay* was not an overlooked or forgotten title – it garnered enough success and popularity to warrant ports to both the NES and MSX. But, it wasn't the game which made Will Wright a household name (clearly coming from a time before he was famous), and more importantly, it has great historical importance as the title which inspired Wright's *Sim* series. But how many times do you look at *SimCity* and think, if it wasn't for a little C64 military chopper we wouldn't have any of this?

Wright's first ever game, it's actually a rather clever 1984 shoot-'em-up which actually tried to do things differently from the other examples of the genre at that time. Taking command of a tiny but highly manoeuvrable white attack chopper, you're free to roam around the sea-and-island-scape tearing shit up; put an LP of Ride of the Valkyries on and it almost feels like you're back in the jungles of 'Nam.

CLAIM TO FAME

Will Wright has on countless occasions stated that he had more fun with the level editor on *Bungeling Bay* than the actual game. The building of those small cities led to *SimCity*, a hugely popular series ported to multiple formats, which led to countless Sim-Something-Elses. Eventually Wright went on to develop the insanely successful *The Sims*, arguably a reworking of *The Little Computer People*.





EARLY GAMES: *Namtir Raiders* (pictured, ZX81), *Cosmic Debris*, *Dimension Destructors* (pictured, ZX Spectrum)

CLAIM TO FAME: *Batman*, *Head Over Heels* (ZX Spectrum)





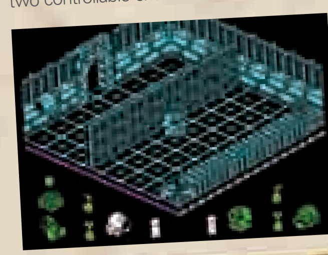
JON RITMAN

Everyone knows *Head Over Heels*, but how many *Namtir Raiders* on the ZX81? He explains, "I only wrote the one ZX81 title then moved straight on to the Speccy. *Namtir Raiders* (my name backwards of course) was a copy of a game I could just about remember playing in a pub in Wales; half of it was written in pure hex as nobody had told me that assemblers existed – that may not mean much to anyone nowadays but it meant I had to be extremely precise as I actually had to hand calculate any jumps or calls."

He spoke of how honoured he felt that magazines like Retro Gamer were interested in covering his earlier, less documented days, before elaborating: "I'm fairly proud of my early titles. I was, without doubt, still finding my way, particularly when it came to game design, but I feel I pushed a few boundaries with some of those very early titles." Ritman also revealed some interesting trivia. "It's entirely possible that *Dimension Destructors* was the first game with floating point maths ('but why?' I hear the world ask). *Cosmic Debris* was a copy of the ever wonderful *Asteroids* but does have that rather cool name. My friend Kemal came up with the name, apparently it came from the title of a Frank Zappa song. When he suggested it I didn't even know what Debris meant."

CLAIM TO FAME

The Spectrum was a system renowned for isometric adventures, and Jon Ritman, in conjunction with Bernie Drummond, created two of the very best. Their first collaboration was *Batman*, starring a slightly portly version of the caped crusader. This would be followed by *Head Over Heels*, an incredible reworking of the isometric formula which implemented a team dynamic by having two controllable characters.



FIRST TIME LUCKY



EUGENE JARVIS

Eugen Jarvis was one of the few developers who got it right the first time. His answer for success: "How to get it right... 1) It's a lot easier and cheaper to learn from other's mistakes rather than your own. 2) The easiest thing to do is design the ultimate game that you would want to play. Do what you know! You are the market research, the focus group, the designer, the play tester etc. This works great if people like you represent a big audience. If you are too expert or too weird, than your game will only appeal to weird experts! *Defender* was easy because we were a small team of average players realizing our game design

SUCCESS: *Defender* (Arcade)



Before They were Famous



EARLY GAMES:
Mazogs, Sabotage, City Patrol, and others. (ZX81)

CLAIM TO FAME:
Popeye, The Trap Door (ZX Spectrum)





DON PRIESTLEY

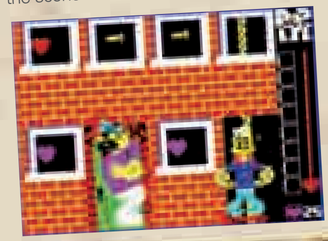
Everyone mentions the Speccy's *Popeye*, while *The Trap Door* featured as a Retro Revival not too long ago, but seldom does Don Priestley's earliest monochrome work get mentioned.

Finding an accurate list of Priestley's ZX81 creations is difficult but, of those we did manage to find, most were impressive. Like his Spectrum work, Priestley strived for bigger and bolder visuals, along with smooth and easy-to-control gameplay. *Mazogs* he described as him "trying to get away from all those games which revolved around a dollar sign being chased by an asterisk." He succeeded: the visuals were bold and well defined, making for a fun, challenging title.

His ZX81 moment of glory though has to be *City Patrol*, a game so impressive it almost defies belief which system it's running on. Sir Clive's second home-micro had visuals which resembled a black sugar cube mosaic, produced, mostly, out of ASCII characters. Despite this, Priestley managed to squeeze a phenomenal three layers of parallax scrolling out of it! The game runs very smoothly and does a good job of conveying a cityscape at night, seen from a chopper. You can almost imagine Baker Street playing in the background, and you're in an early Eighties cop show.

CLAIM TO FAME

Popeye was Priestley's first game to wow the public. But there are so many worth listing: *The Trap Door, Flunky, Gregory Loses His Clock*, and so on. In interviews he also often spoke fondly of his *3D Tanx* title. Priestly was a enigmatic figure, coming to games from teaching, and then leaving when the days of bedroom coding ended, but along the way he brought a unique perspective to the scene.





EARLY GAMES: *Project Planning Package* (ZX81), *ZX-Sideprint, Omnicalc, Crevasse+Hotfoot* (ZX Spectrum)

CLAIM TO FAME:
Skool Daze, Back to Skool





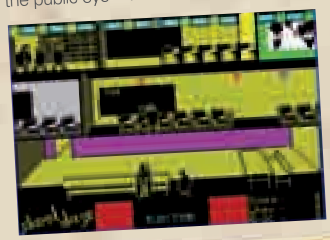
DAVE REIDY

Dave Reidy was one of many Spectrum stars who shone brightly, creating legions of devotees, yet never evolved beyond the hardware. Best known for his schoolboy-based *Skool* duo of games, Reidy's entrance into videogames was unconventional. Looking at his earlier titles most would have predicted he didn't have a knack for games – his very first piece of software was PPP, a business package for the ZX81. Professional business style utilities continued with ZX-Sideprint and Omnicalc (pictured) – undeniably useful in terms of their function (even winning awards), they don't make for very exciting screenshots.

His first proper games were *Crevasse* and *Hotfoot*, bundled on different sides of a single tape. *Crevasse* is a simple, enjoyable puzzler-style game, involving the moving of a cross-hair over a screen with randomly occurring ice cracks. *Hotfoot* meanwhile is an unplayable mess of colour and rabbits. Further games fared better, with *The Train Game* and later the highly successful *Wheelie* (described in Retro Gamer 17 as being Microsphere's most successful title). Looking at these previous games, it would be impossible to imagine that in 1984 Reidy would create the game he is perhaps best known for, the sublimely enjoyable *Skool Daze*...

CLAIM TO FAME

There's something quintessentially British about these two timeless classics (released in 1984 and 1985 respectively) – they represent a time not only when commonplace themes could prove immensely fun, but also when the UK could produce titles not smothered by the influences of America and Japan. It's a telling fact that it's taken over 20 years for another school-based game to capture the public eye – with *Canem Canis Edit*.



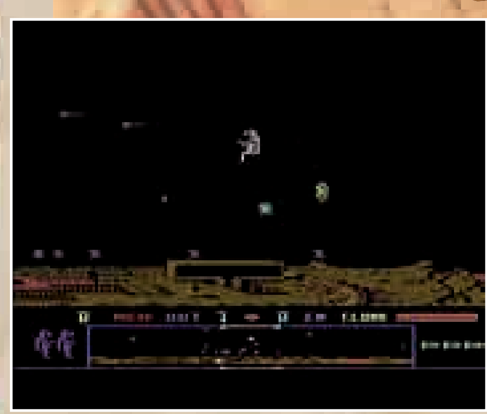
FIRST TIME LUCKY



ARCHER MACLEAN

Some of you may recognise Archer Maclean from such magazines as Retro Gamer, such events as the Retro Ball, and for such games as *IK+*. But even before this, Mr Maclean was wowing gamers – his first published game was a huge success. He has said in past interviews, "I was a great admirer of all the Eugene Jarvis games. So I took inspiration from *Scramble, Defender, Stargate, Galaxian* and many others and went for it." It eventually led to his first Ferrari, and also a long and successful career. Considering the masses of action going on all over the screen, coupled with some tight and very responsive controls, how could it not have succeeded?

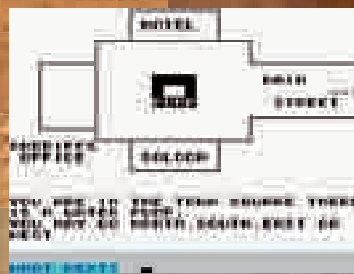
SUCCESS: *Dropzone* (Atari 800, C64)





EARLY GAMES: *Ghost Town, Ziggurat* (ZX Spectrum)

CLAIM TO FAME: Working with RARE, *Plok* (SNES), *Wetrix* (PC)



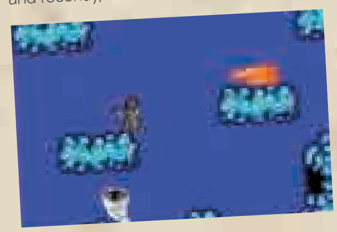


JOHN PICKFORD

John Pickford, of the acclaimed Zee-3 and Pickford Bros started creating games in 1981, also on the humble ZX81. But it wouldn't be until 1984 that he had his first game published, *Ghost Town* on the ZX Spectrum, programmed in BASIC. Unlike many budding designers, whose early pre-fame titles had little effect on later work, this simple adventure would profoundly shape John's work: "It was a complete rip-off of another game called *Greedy Gulch*. All games were just copies of *Pac-Man*, or clones of other games, so I didn't think anything of it, but Virgin got legal action from the author – quite rightly. Ever since then, I've been adamant I wouldn't do a clone of another game." The next game John Pickford worked on was *Ziggurat*, along with friend Paul Ranson – it was an unusual game which Ste believes was intended to be a series, "I do seem to remember that it was planned as the first of a series of games starring *Guy Manly*, and that there was a game being designed set in the tombs of Sumaria. I was going to draw a comic strip which would be the intro to the game, and I'm sure Paul's brother was involved as well, so it was going to be a multi-family/brother affair." The brothers worked on so many games over the years this section could go on and on. Thankfully, they've kindly documented all of them, along with commentary, on their website: www.zee-3.com.

CLAIM TO FAME

It's difficult to pinpoint when John Pickford and the Pickford Bros made the leap from wide-eyed hopefuls to stars. They had a hand in many 8-bit micro games, but in truth the moment came when John Pickford first sat in RARE's office and met with Tim Stamper. His first game for them was *Wizards & Warriors II: Ironsword* – a quality game which still stands up today. Other highlights are *Equinox*, *Plok*, *Wetrix*, and recently, *Naked Wars*.

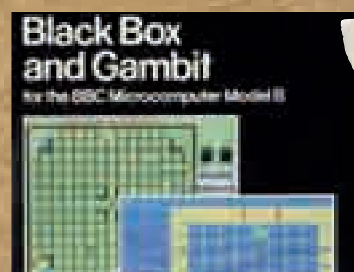




EARLY GAMES: *Black Box* and *Gambit*, *Tellscope* and *Cavey* (BBC Model B)

CLAIM TO FAME: *Dizzy*



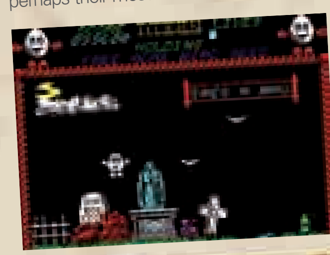


THE OLIVER TWINS

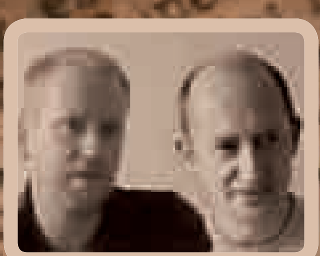
The Oliver twins' earliest titles were for the BBC. *Black Box* was one and *Gambit* was a competition entry, winning first prize, and was published by Acornsoft. Their next solo project was a memory game, *Tellscope*, and then a *Space Invaders* clone called *Cavey*. Philip Oliver spoke on these early days. "In many was you can look back on these games and cringe, but then everyone has to start somewhere. We were always humble about our games and knew there were better games out there. We therefore strived to get them better and better and that meant a lot of hard work and long hours. It's important to be humble – anyone that has the attitude that what they do is brilliant usually stops trying and very quickly their skills fade." Like many others, he believes part of the fun was overcoming hardware limitations. "What was so cool about the early days was the ability to concentrate on what games we could make, that we thought gamers would play. Computers were slow and extremely limited, so we had to think carefully about what we were capable of finishing. So often people set their goals too high, and then never have things completed to a stage where they can show it to other people. We were careful not to do this."

CLAIM TO FAME

What more can be written about Dizzy which hasn't already been committed to paper? The Oliver twins had been involved in roughly a dozen games before creating Dizzy – The Ultimate Cartoon Adventure. It was available on several 8-bit systems, spawning a long running and hugely popular series. While the brothers Oliver would go on to create many other games, including new IP, Dizzy was perhaps their most iconic creation.



FIRST TIME LUCKY



THE STAMPER BROTHERS

Before RARE there was Ultimate Play the Game, and before Ultimate, there was Ashby Computers & Graphics Ltd. Company founders Chris and Tim Stamper, along with Carole Ward and John Latchbury, created *Jetpac* as their first commercial game. It was released in May 1983 and sold over 300,000 copies. The first-time lucky team garnered over a million pounds. Sure, some cynics may well argue that getting it right from the start had more to do with good timing and the fact that many other games were low quality, rather than any intrinsic quality. We say rubbish - it's no doubt the same people who are constantly complaining that there's no real talent left at Rare.

SUCCESS: *Jetpac*



NINJA GAIDEN

SEGA DOES THE NINJA!



» **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
» **RELEASED:** 1992
» **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
» **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MASTER SYSTEM
» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £3



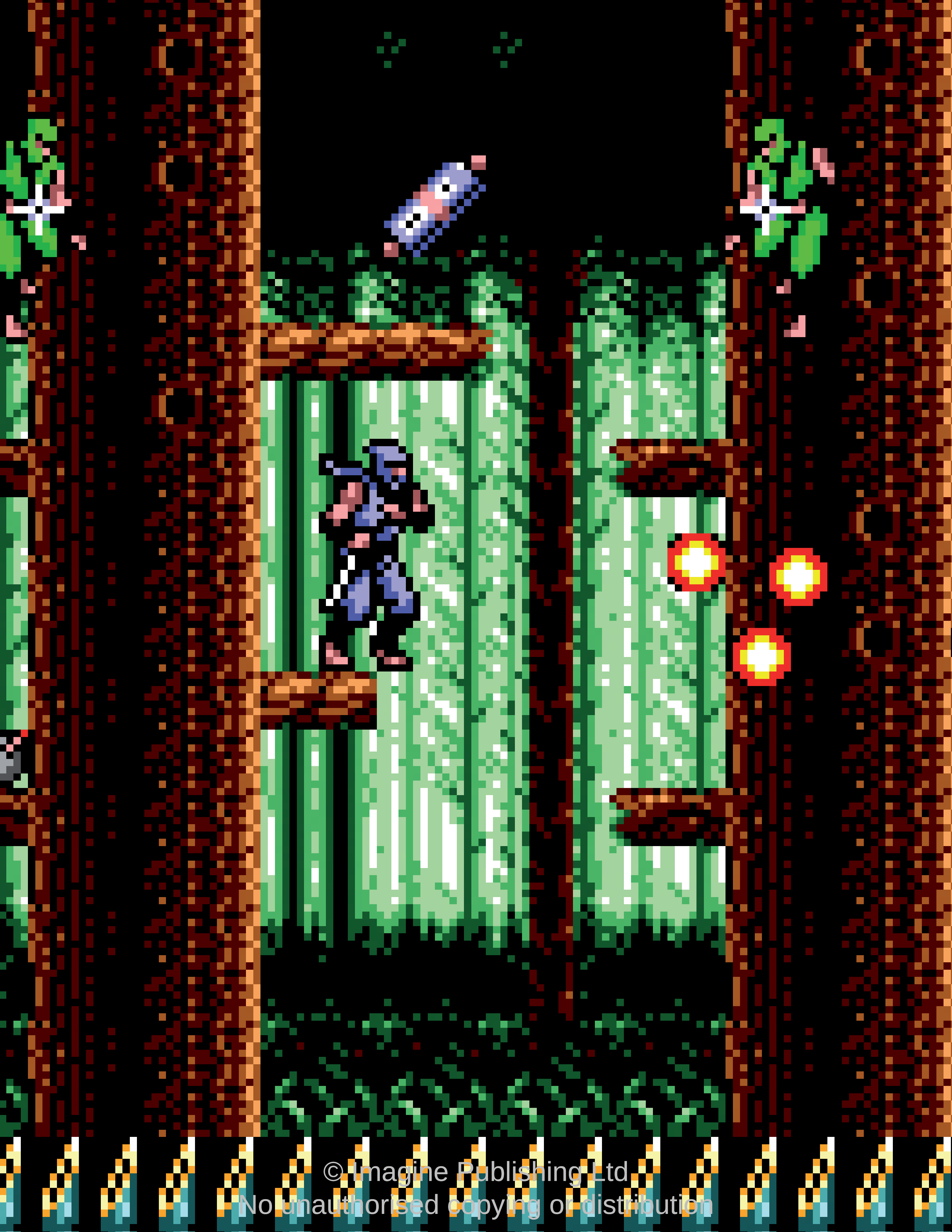
HISTORY

Everyone loves *Ninja Gaiden*, right? I of course mean the 8-bit versions, not the Xbox game which Tomonobu Itagaki openly revealed in interview, was originally never intended to be a *Ninja Gaiden* game! The change of direction and name came about when Tecmo thought it could capitalise on the popularity of *Ryu Hayabusa*, and so ordered them to adapt things accordingly. For the true spirit of the *Ninja* you need to look to the early Nineties, where you'll find that most gamers were huge fans of the NES trilogy (if we're talking home versions as opposed to the different arcade version). But! How many realise there was an exclusive version made for the Master System, "reprogrammed" by Sega themselves?

This SMS version is totally different to every other version available, and rather cryptically it states on the title screen and back of the box, "reprogrammed Game 1992 Sega." This shouldn't come as a surprise since on several occasions Sega ported other companies' games to its own hardware, but what makes it so exciting is that Sega's remade version of the Tecmo classic is not only entirely original but it's also equally as brilliant. As a huge fan of the NES original I'm going to court controversy and say that personally, in some ways, the Master System version is actually better than Tecmo's original home version.

For a start, along with containing all the standard expected elements of *Ninja Gaiden*, it's visually brighter, has more colours, and the audio is far richer than in the NES game. More important than the increased aesthetics though, is that Sega did an exemplary job with the level design, layout, pacing, and jumping physics. The game is also actually slightly easier than the others, with greater emphasis on platforms and the ability to grab onto them. It's slick, smooth, and a riveting adventure. For anyone who has played other 8-bit *Ninja Gaiden* games, to suddenly discover this overlooked gem is a wonderful experience as it allows a return to the same universe, albeit with entirely new and exciting content. Track it down, then post us thank you letters.





The evolution of

FOOTBALL MANAGEMENT

All football fans secretly fancy themselves as managers. From its beginnings on the ZX81 and Speccy to hyper-realistic sims of today, people like Kevin Toms and Sports Interactive have helped to make their dreams a reality. Sean Smith dons his personalised tracky top and investigates....

Before the standard of home computing technology and skilled programming had improved sufficiently, the closest you could get to managing the destiny of a virtual football team of your own choosing, or indeed any facet of soccer-related interactivity, was by flicking a few Subbuteo men about, answering quizzes and "YOU ARE THE REFEREE!" trivia in footy mags, tiresome "management by mail" scams or simply screaming your obscenities-laced tactical nous whilst watching the match. Of course, in this day and age, super-powered PCs and consoles can allow even the most run-of-the-mill Joe Bloggs from Surbiton to embark on a chequered management career that makes Mourinho look like Dr Josef Venglos, and all whilst sitting in a near-inanimate state. Football management games have become big business. Indeed, just a cursory check on most football fans forums will reveal numerous discussions about the intricacies and game mechanics of the latest *Football Manager*, similarly the discussions that take place about real football are laced with tell tale signs of a history of "Champ Man" syndrome.

With all cultural and gaming phenomena, the evolutionary process of the management sim began in humble circumstances. *Football Manager* circa 1982 was and still is credited as being the first game in the genre, a benchmark title that instantly grabbed the attention of the public, appealing to a crossover audience of long-time gamers and casual fans with an interest in the sport, many of whom would be playing a computer game for the first time.

We would normally reveal at this point "the person behind…" this classic retro release. However Kevin Toms was no ordinary programmer. Much like the smooth-talking razor magnate Victor Kayam or the aggressive, terrifying Barry Scott , Toms' legendarily-bearded face

went straight on the ads and into the consciousness of the public. We were lucky enough to speak with Kevin recently, as he very kindly answered our fervent series of questions from his current home in New Zealand. The much-loved *FM* promos were one of the first things we asked him about.

"Because people reacted to finding out I wrote the game when I attended computer games shows. I then realised that it was not so different to writing books or music; you have a style of writing and people want to buy that style. The corporation is irrelevant; it is the creative artist that counts. Also, by using my own face, I was showing I believed in my product by risking putting myself there with it. If it was no good, I was going to get the flak." This also explains why Retro Gamer staff have their caricatured mugs in the front of the mag, incidentally.

Toms' background seems straightforward enough. "I was a professional computer programmer on mainframes before I worked in computer games," explained the Torquay-supporting legend. "I had also worked for industrial and government organisations", he added, shadily. Perhaps a clairvoyant-like foresight compelled him to write a management simulation, but regardless of the reasons, he knew he was onto a winner. Once the game was finished and dispatched into the proverbial onion bag, the driven Toms formed his own company, Addictive. "I formed the company and launched in 1982. The game was written first, because I wanted to write a football management computer game. I have some marketing sense and thought people would want to buy it. It was obviously entertaining. I realised the game itself had an addictive quality. Once people started playing the game, I could not get them off it."

Toms had been experimenting with the concept of a football management simulation since an early age, albeit confined to the technology that was available at the time. Things could have been so different, however, had he decided on counters and dice rather than harnessing the awesome power of the computer!

"I had been writing football management games since I was about 11", he explained, "Mostly board games. I did a number of iterations and at one point was in talks with a leading board games company."

Thankfully, he discovered the true path – the ZX81 and its ilk: "Home computers gave me the scope to solve a number of design problems." But why did he choose to program the initial title in BASIC, rather than machine code? "BASIC, a high-level language, is much more appropriate for a strategy game than machine code. There is a lot of logic, maths, and tuning required. Machine code is just too rudimentary for that.

It's different if your aim is largely animation, as was true of other games at the time. I remember people thinking that machine code was better than BASIC but it's just a different tool for a different job. I have written in machine code, but I have also written in many other languages. They have always been just tools for me, so which is the best for the job is the question."

When viewed in the present day, *Football Manager* shows us that the basic themes of the management simulation have changed very little in the 25 years that have passed. Using the text-based, statistical interface, the player – nay, manager – is given the task of starting from lowly old Division 4, selecting a side, wheeling and dealing in the transfer market, contending with injuries and financial constrictions, and ultimately keeping hold of their job by pleasing the board of directors.

With the formalities out of the way, the meat of the game revolves around the match itself, and later versions of the game included a crude yet undeniably tense "highlights" section which allowed you to live vicariously through the onscreen stick-men, willing your pixellated charges to bang a few in and save your managerial bacon. Toms acknowledges

"It's just like playing in a foreign country"

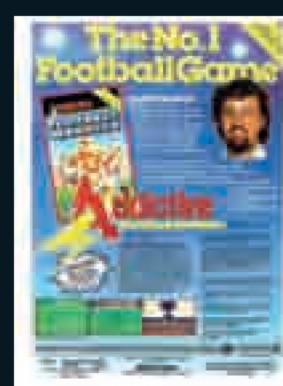
It isn't just us Brits who enjoy the ability to play God (well, Glenn Hoddle) with a series of virtual players. Management sims such as *Bundesliga Football Manager*, *Championship Manager Italia*, *Norge* and *Belgique* and the many versions of the original *Football Manager* have been incredibly successful – UK creations one and all, to boot. And any European RG readers take note – you could make a few quid out of our pal Miles: "*CM Italia* went down really well, better here than there, and even the Belgian league version did better here in the UK. *CM Norge* was an official release, although was converted by Domark rather than us. It's the only SI game that we don't have a copy of unfortunately, so if anyone sees a boxed copy out there, please drop us a line." Kevin Toms is currently working on *New Zealand Football Championship Manager* in his adopted homeland.



» Yes it looks rubbish, but watching the pixelated players go about their business really added to the experience.



» The classic loading screen familiar to fans the world over.



» The Beard Of Excellence preceded Ninty's Seal Of Quality. Just ask Mr N. Cumming, West Bromwich.

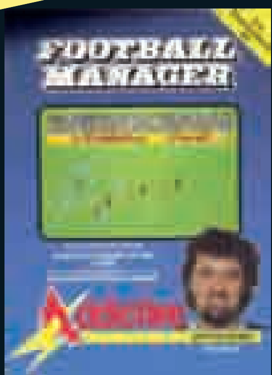


» *Premier Manager*? Ron Atkinson can only dream of landing a sweet job like this these days.

When viewed in the present day, Football Manager shows us that the basic themes of the management simulation have changed very little in the 25 years that have passed

The evolution of

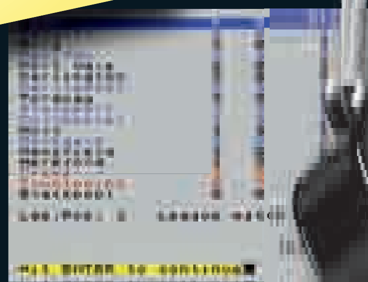
FOOTBALL MANAGEMENT



» Same game, different system, same familiar face furniture.



» In the Eighties, two polar opposites often found themselves sharing cassette space.



» The all-action *Football Manager* in, erm, action.

that due to the inclusion of this exciting (for the time) addition, there is no doubt as to which version he is most proud of – "The Spectrum, being the first version with match action and with the way I implemented it, gave it its own charm. My own personal favourite version was the Amstrad CPC."

It took Toms much tinkering and many months to get the game exactly how he originally intended. " ZX81 took a year, the Spectrum conversion and animation, about three months. The game itself evolved over a period of time, with me always knowing what I wanted to do next. Friends were play-testing it giving positive feedback, so I could tell it was good."

Indeed it was. With the release date set for the World Cup in Spain, the game shifted a fair few copies. The sales figures are impressive, even by today's standards. "It's somewhere between one and two million. A lot of people have played *Football Manager*." The appeal of the game was not difficult to understand. "The sheer playability of it. That's the most important bit above all the other stuff like flash graphics. It's just got to be fun to play."

Football Manager 2 was again adorned with the completely impartial liner notes stating: "He has excelled in the creation of this game with his brilliance"

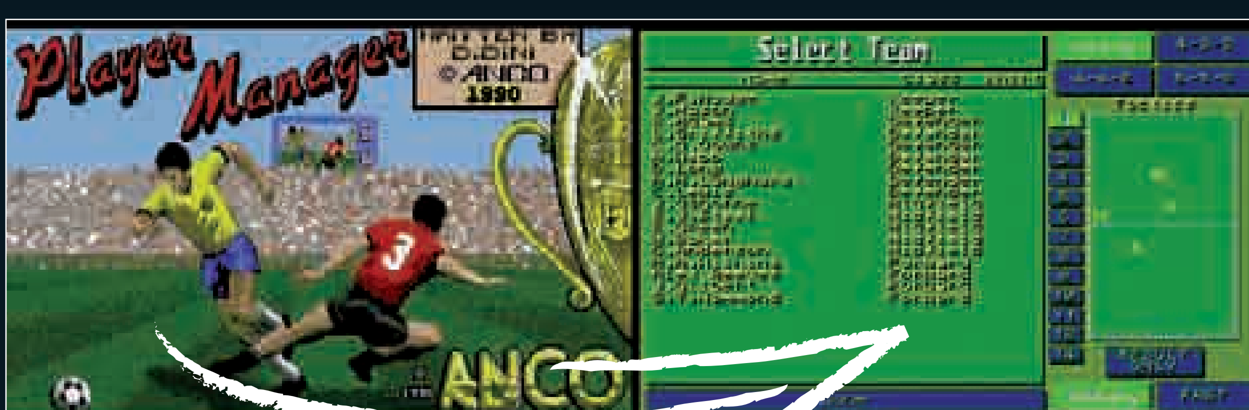


» No wonder Cloughie never got offered the England job. You've had a shocker, son!

The massive sales and critical acclaim levelled at *Football Manager* meant that a sequel was inevitable. Arriving in 1988, *Football Manager 2* was again adorned with Toms' smiling visage, with the completely impartial liner notes stating with almost Biblical resonance: "He has excelled in the creation of this game with his brilliance". It was certainly a step up from the original game, with improved graphics and deeper strategic elements. For example, substitutions were now allowed at half time, and the exact position of each player could be tweaked on the pitch. With an expansion pack being released a year later, followed by a *World Cup Edition* in 1990, and numerous translations and localisations including Spanish and German versions, things appeared rosy for Addictive, something that was noticed by Prism Leisure who would go on to purchase the company from Toms. The thing was, however, that whilst *Football Manager 2* was undoubtedly a fine piece of work, other developers had seen the success and popularity in the genre, and jumped on the bandwagon themselves.

Brian Clough's Football Fortunes (1987), however, completely missed the opportunity to capitalise on the prestige and clout of one of the finest football managers of that or any era. Whilst there were arguably more bizarre simulations released in the Eighties (*Jack Charlton's Match Fishing*, anyone?), the crazed combination of loading-times-heavy Spectrum software and a dodgy board game meant that Ol' Big 'Ead found himself right at the bottom of the early management simulation pile. Amazingly, Cult Games recreated this ridiculous set up in 1989, somehow managing to rope in England hero Bryan Robson, and pissing off the public with a hefty £19.95 price tag.

The other contenders to Toms throne were D+H Games' *Football Director* (1986, with a 1987 sequel), Peaksoft's *The Boss*, released in budget form as *Soccer Boss* (1987), Scanatron's *The Double* (1987) and Goliath Games' *Tracksuit Manager* (1988). *Tracksuit Manager* centred around managing international squads, with Goliath taking the innovative step of including all of the actual legitimate player data of the time. As such, the game was incredibly popular and fun to play, taking advantage of the fact that virtually everyone in the country with an interest in football feels adept at offering management tips to our maligned national coach. With a



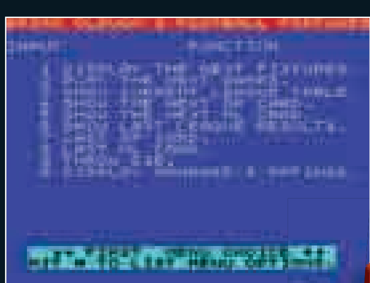
» Dini's excellent, but now rather dated *Player Manager.*



» Another management game, another uninspiring advert.

teasing, *World Of Sport*-style vidiprinter dishing up the action, *Tracksuit Manager* was a fun addition to the growing genre. *Soccer Boss* was text-based and crude to look at, but is regarded as the finest the Commodore 64 had to offer.

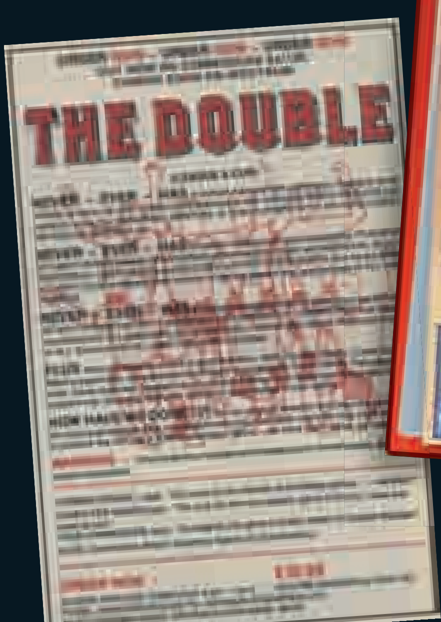
With Everton talisman Howard Kendall on endorsement duties, precisely around the time he buggered off to manage Athletic Bilbao, *The Double* is perhaps the lesser known of the pretenders to *Football Manager*'s crown. With the emphasis on observation and individual management – there were no player attribute ratings, which meant you had to work out who is performing and who isn't on a match by match basis – *The Double* won acclaim at the time for it's quick and intuitive gameplay and stylish presentation.

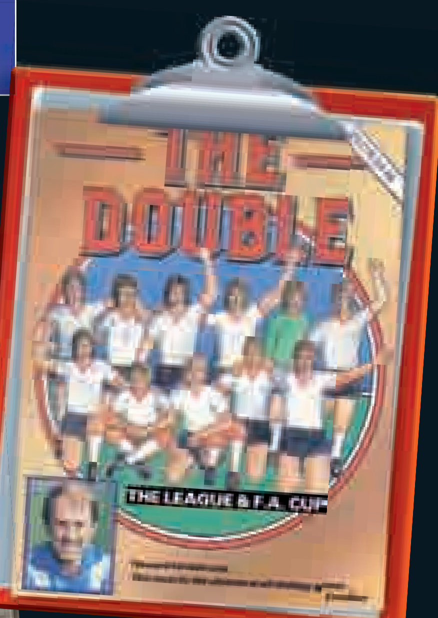


» You really cannot appreciate the animation and visual splendour from this static picture. Honestly.

Football Director (and it's 1987 sequel) was another worthy simulation that stacked up the statistics nicely, albeit with bugs that caused the game to crash, and generally slow loading times even by the standards of the day.

There were several more simulations that were released during the 8-bit era and on the cusp of 16-bit domination, many of which were mail order only, or with little to distinguish them from their rivals. These included *Super League*, *Champions* (another Peaksoft effort, which in keeping with the tradition of the time featured rioting fans), *United*, *Premier II*, *English Super League*, and all manner of other low-rent games with "manager" in the title. Kevin Toms has a lot to answer for. It was not until the Nineties that the next





» **Left:** The curt, aggressive marketing of Eighties mail order games in full effect. **Right:** Kendall obviously quoted before seeing the boxart, then.



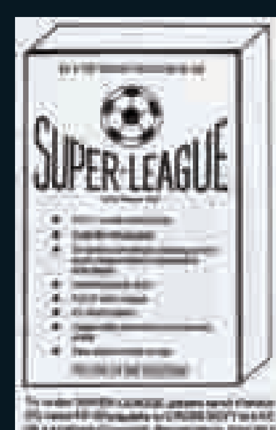
» Please note address no longer valid. All cheques now payable to Darran Jones, Imagine Publishing.

slew of major release surfaced. Anco had been famous for their fast-paced *Kick Off* games, put together by the exotic sounding Dino Dini whose name featured heavily in marketing, much the same as Toms' ubiquitous beaming face rug. *Player Manager* (1990) successfully blended the winning *Kick Off* match engine to a sophisticated management simulation, in a way that was only ever bettered by a certain Sensible Software title half a decade later. *Football Manager* received a second true sequel; however as Kevin Toms points out, " I had nothing to do with *FM3* at all". It was poor, and tellingly there were to be no more sightings of Toms' face on our game boxes.

The original *Championship Manager* arrived to a moderate reception in 1992 for the Amiga, Atari ST and PC, produced by two then-unknown brothers who founded the development company Sports Interactive that very same year. Retro Gamer spoke with current SI big cheese Miles Jacobson, who set the scene. "For Oliver and Paul Collyer, who started the game back in the day whilst schoolboys in Shropshire, the original inspiration was other football

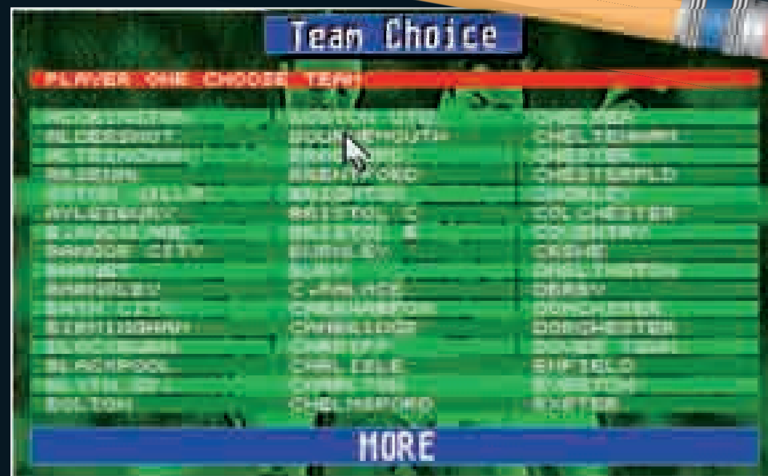
"It is a funny old game – literally"

Sports Interactive have fingers in other sporting management pies in the shape of *Eastside Hockey Manager* (an NHL sim using a *CM/FM* style engine) and *Out Of The Park Baseball*, aimed at breaking the American market, no doubt. But there have been some other weird and wonderful UK-made sports management sims. Addictive and Toms' subsequent interest Silicon Joy-produced *Head Coach* (*FM* clone, gridiron) and *Grand Prix Manager*. 1995's *Extreme Warfare* began a massively popular franchise representing steroid-gobbling anti-sport "pro" wrestling, whilst the 8-bits saw pointless sounding sims like *Boxing Manager* and *International Cricket Manager*. As if managing, rather than participating, in a boxing match was not banal enough, along came *Snooker Manager* – surely a contender for the most boring game premise ever.





» **Above:** *Champ Man*, man. Even the fake manager guy looks real.



» Glaring inaccuracy ahoy! That is AFC Bournemouth to you. In your face, Collyers!

management games not doing everything they wanted, and boredom. It was not made as a commercial game originally, just something for the brothers to do for a bit of fun, and it was their mates who persuaded them to send it off to publishers. *Football Manager* was the game of the era and the inspiration."

Much the same way as Kevin Toms had decided to go about creating what was to become the Collyers' inspiration, the game was created in the manner that was de rigeur at the time – in the bedroom. "The process was very haphazard and it cost absolutely nothing apart from time. It literally was two schoolkids with a hobby, and when they had time, they coded. They made the game for themselves."

Whilst the original *Championship Manager* did not feature real players and leagues, and had basic, garish graphics with very little going on, the lukewarm reception it was afforded soon grew into a massive buzz within the gaming and wider football-fan world. Domark's release, with the stylised, identikit manager on the front ("He was a guy from a model agency and I have no idea what he's doing now!"), claimed to be "The Most Realistic Football Management Simulation Ever!", and when compared to other fare that surfaced at the time, such as Gremlin's *Premier Manager* and US Gold's *The Manager*, it clearly was. With a scary amount of statistics and abilities, the game eschewed the flashiness of the advertising-led, stadium-renovating Gremlin effort (its main rival) in favour of riveting gameplay. The match sections, simple bar charts moving hypnotically, interspersed with occasional commentary, were absorbing and compelling, much in the same way as pre-Sky era fans would stare blankly at Teletext to see how their side was getting on.

Championship Manager 93/94 arrived almost exactly one year later, complete with not only the latest league and tournament structures, but overseas players and international transfers, reserve teams, manager and player awards, and best of all – the actual real player names. The marriage of the already excellent *CM* setup to the glorious real footballer stats was almost too much to bear. Indeed, this correspondent recalls entering a strange, twilight world back in 1993, where days turned into nights, sessions lasted for days, and it felt as though I genuinely held the destinies of the players in my pallid hand. Why, Sports Interactive? Why? "Well, for a start, your 24 hours were probably mainly taken up by loading times back in the day . We plead "guilty as charged" though – we have invented some magic dust which we sprinkle upon our games which make them so addictive. Or maybe we all believe that we should be managers."

Too right.

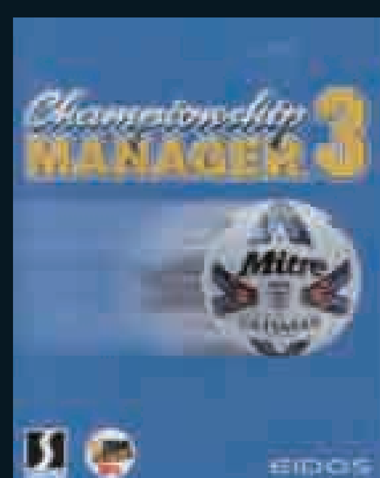
The *93/04* edition heralded a tradition of yearly *CM* updates and each game holds many memories for long term fans. For example, we always suspected that some



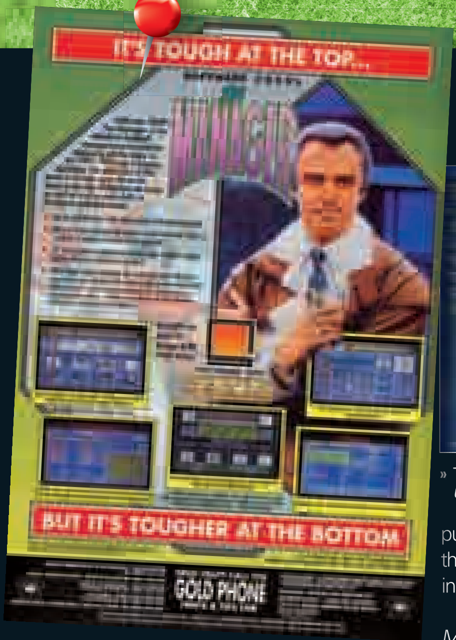
» Check out the challenge taking place here!



» *CM3* allowed you to switch from Bolton to La Bombonera. Sweet.



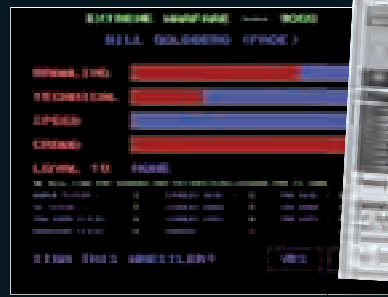
» Another year, another cast-in-stone classic. The mighty *CM3*.



» *The Manager* – allowed you to take control of a bling bling, *Dirty Harry*-era Clint.



» The last game Sports Interactive ever released under the *Champ Manager* name. Sob.



» *Extreme Warfare* – like being hit round the head with a chair, only with more stats. Raaaargh!



» Jesus wept.

teams were stronger than others. Dele Adebola, current clogger for Coventry, was the king back then – 40 goals a season, England caps, the lot! "It's one of those misnomers that have turned into urban myths through time. The original UK researcher supports no team. There were no changes made by others, and no bias at all. In fact, if anything, those teams were made worse. As for Crewe, they were great in *CM93/94*, but that's because they had players like Neil Lennon and Danny Murphy at the club – they are well known for their very strong youth policy."

Researchers did have a bit of fun somewhere along the line though. Names such as To Madeira, Mark Collis and even Olly Collyer will be readily familiar to long term fans. "Some of those you mention we didn't even know weren't real until well after the game was out! We have a policy now of no fake players, although that doesn't stop some of the researchers putting them in, and us having to clear them out. We do have fake staff members in the game though."

And the best ever *Championship Manager* player? "Zinedine Zidane. The only player to ever have "200" potential in the database."

Onwards and upwards went the franchise, with proper sequels arriving in the form of *CM 2* (1995), *3* (1999) and *4* (2003), each one further expanding the vast football universe and cementing SI's reputation as management sim godheads. With only PCs able to handle the amount of information at hand, each sequel and update went on to be among the fastest selling games of its respective era. In 2003 it was announced Sports Interactive would no longer develop games under the brand *Championship Manager* as this was owned by publisher Eidos. SI then signed a publishing deal with Sega and would produce its new football management games under a new moniker… *Football Manager*. "It was acquired from Prism Leisure, who bought Addictive back in the day. I have had email exchanges with Kevin, whose *Football Manager* I loved. When we knew that we were leaving Eidos, we went through a long period of coming up with names, none of which were good enough and our lawyer knew people at Prism, so approached on our behalf. It's great to have been a part of gaming history with *Championship Manager*, and then be able to continue a piece of history with *FM*."

An instant rivalry was born, as Eidos endeavoured to continue producing *CM* games. To date, these have been markedly inferior, with the *FM* brand going on to even more insane levels of accomplishment, popularity and success. "We try to concentrate on what we're doing, rather than others in the field – it's important for us to continue to improve *Football Manager* in the way that we want. Sega has been pretty different to our previous experiences – they have as much passion as we do for our games. That said, I think Eidos is a very different place now to how it was when we were signed there, as they have new owners and a new ethos. Some sections of the press have tried to build up a rivalry between the two studios, but there isn't really one, or certainly not from our side. I've met a few of the guys and they seem like nice guys. I wish them well."

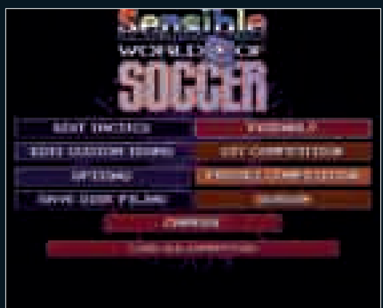
Toms, meanwhile, has produced his own online take on the genre, *Footymax*, which can be found on the internet now. We asked him the question most fans of his games will want to know – does he still have the beard?

"I keep it in a jar!"

Amen.

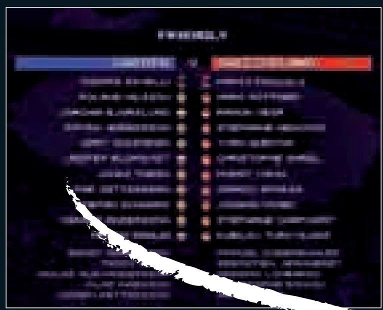
"Taking the Sensible option"

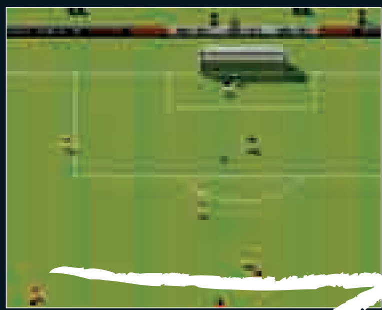
Whilst we love a decent football strategy game, very few titles have successfully combined both management and arcade style playability to useful effect. Anco's aforementioned *Player Manager* was a massive hit in 1990, but history is littered with garbage, right up to the watered down Master League in *Pro Evo* and the woeful club-themed tie-ins of recent years. The only true jack of all trades was Sensible Software's sumptuous *Sensible World Of Soccer* (1995) which provided the perfect equation: light hearted management elements + real players + top-down arcade footy genius = classic game. Still people cry out for a true sequel or retro compilation, yet still we are forced to lug out the gargantuan Amiga PSU, or resort to an emulator (shudders). There cannot be many RG readers who haven't sampled it's delights, and those who haven't should be stoned until they are dead.



» The magnificent *SWOS*.

And the best ever Championship Manager player ever? "Zinedine Zidane. The only player to ever have "200" potential in the database"





» **Far left:** It is a veritable Who's Who? Of crap foreign imports to the Prem! **Right:** The classic, super deformed genius of *Sensi*.



» The latest *Football Manager* is out now.

THE CLASSIC GAME



SUPER MARIO LAND



» Look at the use of space. The clean lines. The almost mathematical precision of placement. Extraordinary.

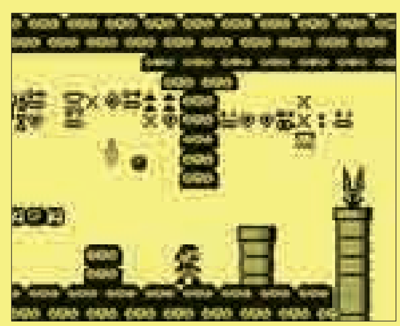
One of the monochrome Game Boy's earliest releases, Super Mario Land displayed a clever understanding of the hardware's inherent abilities. It contained bold and ingenious design decisions which were promptly ignored by nearly all future GB developers. Despite being a Classic Game, why didn't more follow its example?

The Game Boy is a curious system. Nearly everyone owned one, but when you look, and we mean really look at the release list, there are strangely few titles which scream out as being all-time classics. Far too many poor licences, a lot of generic rubbish, and countless games which, despite being mind-numbingly astounding, few have even heard of let alone actually had the fortune of playing – have you ever heard of *Cat Trap* or *Mr. Chin's Gourmet Paradise*? Several games haven't even been dumped.

This leaves only a select few titles worthy of two-page Classic Game coverage: *Tetris*, *Gargoyles Quest*, *Pokémon*, *Link's Awakening*, *Alien 3*, and of course *Super Mario Land*. Notice how most were either released early in the system's life or, in the case of *Pokémon*, began development very early on before getting a late release. Why were so many of the greatest GB games, like *Super Mario Land* (a launch title), mainly forged in those early experimental years? The general reason is one of scope, with later releases being overly ambitious, trying to replicate NES and later even SNES-style visuals, nearly always resulting in a turgid mess (how much crack had RARE been smoking when releasing guff like GB *Killer Instinct*?).

Super Mario Land's magnificence as a GB game results from its minimalist purity. Look at everything's diminutive pixel stature, stripped back to the bare essentials yet still recognisable. The minute details are exquisite in the extreme, evoking the same feelings as seeing delicate Japanese embroidery, nouveau cuisine, or a puppy whose body is too small to support a deformedly large head. By not attempting to shoehorn enormous sprites onto the system's limited 160 by 144 pixel screen, it meant all potential dangers could be seen in advance and there was no need to jump blindly hoping for a platform to appear; there was no blurring or confusion when viewing the screen, which is arguably the most important thing in handheld games.

Visually everything is functional, with an abstract symbolism for key elements. There is the standard Power Mushroom which increases size, but due to the



» The Egyptian themed levels even have hieroglyphs in the background. How's that for realism?

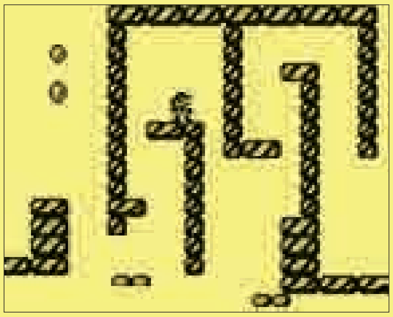
IN THE KNOW



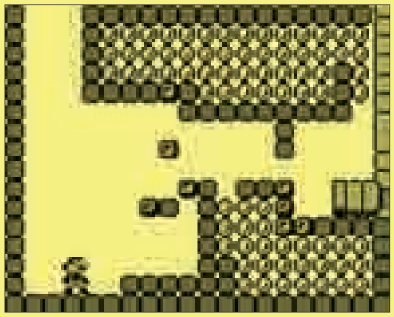
- » **VERSION FEATURED:** NINTENDO
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **RELEASED:** 1989
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £4

"THE MINUTE DETAILS ARE EXQUISITE IN THE EXTREME, EVOKING THE SAME FEELINGS AS SEEING DELICATE JAPANESE EMBROIDERY OR NOUVEAU CUISINE"





» A beautiful example of the simple but effective design in *Super Mario Land*. Look at the structure and usage of platforms.



» Shoot a fireball through the holes and watch as it collects all the coins for you.



» Look closely at Mario. Closer! He's replicating Phil Collin's body moves in the music video to I Can't Dance.

limited palette the 1Up mushroom is replaced with a heart – a different but equally recognisable icon. It may seem strange to say, but there is no wastage in *SML* – no grotesque excess and no superficiality to distract from the perfectly formed core. In this way *SML* acutely represents many of the things people like about and seek in retro games: abstract minimalism which isn't contrived, highly refined mechanics, and a purity of design which gives the impression that every block and every coin's position has been agonised over.

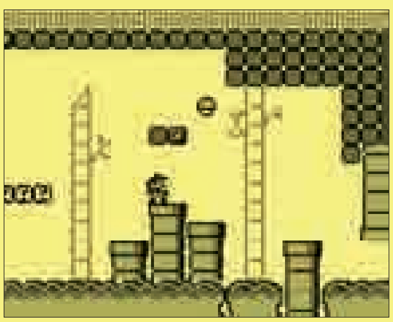
This high quality is not surprising when you consider the all-star development team. Along with Hirokazu "Hip" Tanaka on sound, the man behind *Metroid*'s music and highly experienced in working with limited audio architecture, there were other people of significance. The producer and man who oversaw the project was not Shigeru Miyamoto but Gunpei Yokoi – the mentor of Miyamoto and also the man who designed the Game Boy. If anyone was suited to making use of what the Game Boy offered, it was Yokoi. He understood the GB's limitations and so expertly worked within them. Others who had a hand in design were Satoru Okada (worked on *Metroid* and is head of the division behind most of Nintendo's handheld systems) and Hirofumi Matsuoka (*Metroid* and *WarioWare*). These were some of Nintendo's best, and it's unsurprising they created a launch title for the new hardware.

> "SUPER MARIO LAND'S MAGNIFICENCE RESULTS FROM ITS MINIMALIST PURITY; EVERYTHING'S STRIPPED BACK TO THE BARE ESSENTIALS, YET IS STILL RECOGNISABLE"

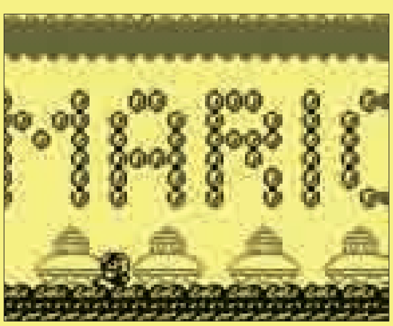
There are some great moments throughout, like the urgency after killing turtles since their shells explode. Fireballs bounce diagonally off every surface and also collect coins. Because they continue bouncing, it allows strategic destruction of enemies from far off, via rebound hits, and also the ability to get distant coins. This coin ability dramatically changes the entire game dynamic; it was a revolution of the traditional *Mario* ethic, though curiously it was never adopted by any of the later iterations. The magnitude of this addition cannot be over-emphasised, refreshing the traditional formula and proving to be incredibly fun.

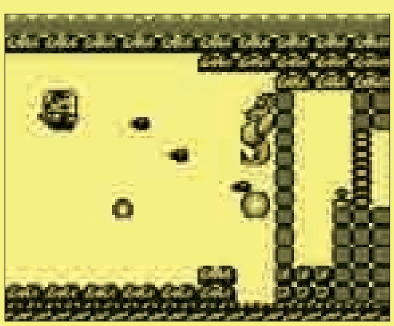
All of this highlights how exaggerated the importance and skill of Miyamoto is, to the point where he overshadows so many of Nintendo's other equally capable visionaries. The combined efforts of Okada and Matsuoka on *SML* were exceptional, being great fun and wonderfully refreshing. It's shameful then that the sequel, *6 Golden Coins*, saw the original development team replaced and also abandoned so many of the original's cool ideas, in a hopeless and almost nauseating attempt to pander to the fans of, and copy ad-hoc, Miyamoto's NES versions. *SML* in retrospect is a bizarre and isolated off-shoot of the main series, which could have easily starred a new protagonist, and has sadly been almost forgotten over the years.

We're not suggesting that *Super Mario Land* is the best *Mario* game ever (technically, it's not even a true *Mario* game), or even that it's more than simply very good. We're suggesting that it symbolises an important way of thinking about game design, focusing on making the best use of the resources available. These are things forgotten by today's developers and, as handhelds move closer to consoles in terms of power (eerily reminiscent of consoles encroaching on arcades in the past), we can't help but feel pangs of nostalgia for the days when handheld games didn't simply mimic portable console games. These were days when handheld games were unique, specially created for their format: the days when *Super Mario Land* was appreciated without developers asking "what if we made it bigger?"



» Hit the block and then watch as the mushroom sails through the air. Eating one increases your size.





» This is Marine Pop, Mario's own custom submarine. *Super Mario Land* is the only game in the series to feature controllable submarines and aeroplanes.

TAINTED LOVE?

Are the Mario brothers overweight, moustachioed, latter-day Lotharios? Surely this is the question parents would ask if only they'd take a closer look at the products peddled by Nintendo. In *Super Mario Land* there is the introduction of a second love interest for Mario, namely Princess Daisy of Sarasaland (the other being Princess Toadstool and Peach who are both one and the same princess, though are perhaps two deranged polar-opposite personalities contained within one alternating being of domineering wickedness and submissive obedience – depending on which demented fan-fiction you read). Contorting the issue of Mario's sordid liaisons is that Daisy is rumoured to be involved with Luigi (who also seems infatuated with Mario's Peach). We're not sure if she hooked up with Luigi after her rendezvous with Mario, or if she already knew Luigi and Mario was having an affair with her behind his brother's back. Or perhaps they were all involved, like some kind of depraved swingers club, hooped-up on Magic Mushrooms in the "Mushroom Kingdom".



DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

RADAR SCOPE
SYSTEMS: ARCADE
YEAR: 1980

SUPER MARIO LAND 2
SYSTEMS: GAME BOY
YEAR: 1992

MARIO AND WARIO
SYSTEMS: SNES
YEAR: 1993



PHILIPS CD-i

THE CD-i IS KNOWN THOUGH MISUNDERSTOOD BY NEARLY EVERYONE. ALTHOUGH A FAILURE IT HAS BOTH GENUINE MERIT AND HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE, BEING SOMETHING OF A FORERUNNER TO SONY'S PLAYSTATION. JOHN SZCZEPANIAK, WITH ASSISTANCE FROM DEVIN SHOCKWELL, ATTEMPTS TO FINALLY CORRECT THE INACCURACIES AND MISTAKES, NOW CONSIDERED COMMON FACT, REGARDING HOLLAND'S FINAL FORAY INTO VIDEOGAME HARDWARE.

Few systems are as unfairly maligned and misrepresented, with regards to the ratio of potential quality and historical significance they had, as the Philips Compact Disc Interactive multimedia system. In some ways it may have been a terribly flawed system, but, and this has to be emphasised, there were also positive attributes, along with a list of historical precedents and high quality games. Its history is complex and shrouded in mistruths, while its lack of success in hindsight seems almost inevitable and the result of gross short-sightedness. It could have spearheaded a revolution, but instead it seems to have become a footnote in Nintendo's history (there was more to the machine than those infamous licences).

The company Philips is a Dutch enigma. Formed in the city of Eindhoven, in 1891 (technically the second oldest company in the world to dabble in games, after Nintendo which is two years older), by brothers Gerard and Anton Philips. It made light bulbs. Philips moved on to other electrical items and, through repeated entries into the electronic multimedia and entertainment market (which had a cascading effect), set Holland apart from the rest of the world as a unique country with a fascinating locally concentrated videogame movement – one of the few (mostly isolated) countries along with Japan, America and the UK, which were all in a league of their own.

Philips' first games hardware was the Videopac G7000 in 1978. Some years later the company became one of the first licensees for the MSX home-computer standard. With the hardware being so popular Holland's MSX following became the biggest outside Japan. Philips' next (and final) form of "games" hardware, the CD-i, would end up being inextricably connected to both Sony and Nintendo – look closely at the history of gaming and you'll find that contrary to ignorant forumite screaming, most supposedly competing companies are forever jumping in and out of bed with each other in an orgy of behind-the-scenes business deals. Metaphorically speaking, of course.

Dead memory tells no tales

Like the Mega CD, Saturn, Turbo Duo, and 3DO, the CD-i featured an on-board save facility powered by a battery. The big difference between the CD-i and aforementioned systems though, is they all had back-up systems for when the batteries died. Sega's systems had data cartridges, the Duo had a special Hu-Card, while the 3DO an unwieldy add-on. When the CD-i lost its memory, and all those precious saves, there was no easy solution; you had to open the CD-i, remove the main PCB, find the Timekeeper Ram chip, then replace it (which was an insane nightmare in itself), or! Open the chip (only for skilled technicians), then use a 4mm and 0.5mm drill to expose and remove two wires connected to the battery, before connecting a 3 Volt Lithium cell, applying some hot glue, and replacing all the innards. Phew! Thankfully some systems like the LG GDI 700, GoldStar GPI 1200 and Philips Portable 370, all allow you to pop a new CR2032 button battery in, whenever you need to. CDinteractive's forum has more info.





"TWO WEEKS BEFORE ITS RELEASE, HALF THE SUPPLY OF CD-I PLAYERS IN THE WORLD HAD TO BE SCRAPPED AND REDESIGNED!" STEVE WARNER



Year released: USA: Late 1991, UK: May 1992

Original price: USA: $2000, Model 910, UK: £600, Model 205

Buy it now for: £20-£40 for a 450 model depending on Digital Video Cartridge upgrade, more with software.

Associated magazines: UK: CDi, CD-i, USA: CD-i World, France: Generation CD-i. Plus other similarly named mags in the Netherlands and Italy.

Associated websites:
www.cdinteractive.co.uk, www.icdia.co.uk, www.blackmoonproject.co.uk, www.cdiemu.org

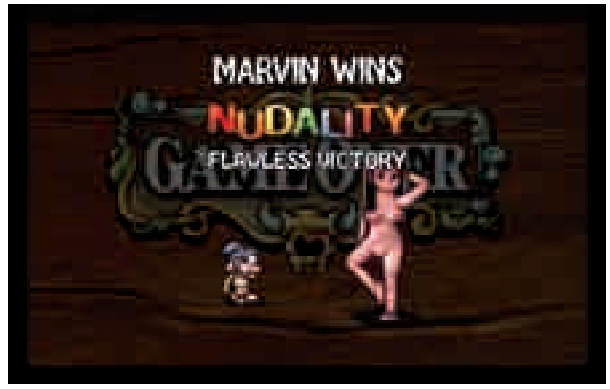
Why the N64 was great… A complicated history, great potential, internet capabilities, a long list of fun though mostly unknown games, several exclusive Nintendo-licensed titles (most of which were rather good), and of course the ability to watch VCD films. The CD-i was an unloved underdog which, despite crippling problems and excessively high pricing, was in fact tremendous fun to use. Thanks to low second-hand prices, now is the perfect time to indulge in CD-i gaming.

PHILIPS CD-i



» The Digital Video Cartridge (needed to run films and play some games) came out in 1993 and retailed for £150. People were not amused.





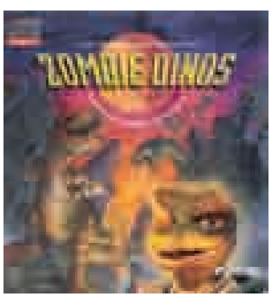
» Years after release an anonymous source released codes for these Nudalities in *The Apprentice*, which escaped the censors knowledge. It's the Hot Coffee that never was.



» *The Apprentice* continually reinvents itself, with this mechanical cat boss on the left, and on the right, Marvin has been turned into a swimming frog.



» After the porn ads debate on our forum, we dare not show any further images from this "Edutainment" title.



» *Zombie Dinos* from Planet Zeltoid was indescribably crap – not helped by lame actors who sound like Cam Clarke. Burn every copy you find, then burn your hands off!

released several personalised models of self-branded CD-i, including portables such as the IVO-V10. When the company decided to enter the hardware market alone, it was based on the fact that it had already both co-created and dabbled in the medium of CD-based games.

Ironically this also means that, regardless of your thoughts on the CD-i itself, every single games machine which can read CDs is in some way connected to these formative years of Philips and Sony research, and therefore also the related hardware. Were these living creatures, the CD-i would be the DNA ancestor of virtually everything using optical media today. Official Philips and CD-i representative/historian Jorg Kennis boldly proclaims such connections – Philips and Sony's influence reaches further than anyone realises.

CD-i development (Green Book) began in the mid-Eighties jointly between Philips and Sony, which together decided to use

"IT WAS JUST OBVIOUSLY NOT A GAME SYSTEM AND PHILIPS WAS ACTUALLY VERY CLEAR IN TELLING US THAT IT DIDN'T BELIEVE THE MARKET FOR THIS DEVICE WAS GAMES" DALE DESHARONE

The Philips, Sony and Nintendo love-triangle goes back as far as the early-Eighties. During this time Philips and Sony began formulating the "Rainbow Books", a curious name for a set of Compact Disc standards (several books were defined by or involved other groups, like Kodak). The Red Book standard (1980) is perhaps the best known and relates to music CDs, while the Green Book standard pertains to the CD-i (Compact Disc Interactive Full Functional Specification). This was defined by Sony, Microware Systems Corporation and Philips (estimated to have done 90 per cent of development).

This means that, while Sony's first videogame hardware was the MSX standard, its first foray into CD based gaming was the CD-i, making the system something of a forerunner to the aborted SNES-CD which later became the PlayStation. Sony manufactured and



Microware's OS-9 Operating System in the machine, allowing real-time embedded application usage. Unfortunately several decisions were made which would ultimately lead to the system's downfall. It was also terribly late in arriving. Speaking to the ever affable Dale DeSharone (see last issue), he explained the launch date was supposed to be in 1988, with the companies involved only planning to allow a single year for the system to be understood and launch software developed.

DeSharone left sunny California in 1987 to move to Boston Massachusetts and work fulltime at Spinnaker Software; his role was to create a CD-i development team. He explains, "Spinnaker had a deal with Philips to produce seven launch titles. I was brought on to help understand the capabilities of the platform and act as design lead." As divulged last issue, his immediate supervisor was a member of the original Red Book specification team, Steve Yellick. Although a technological guru he didn't know about making games, and after a year met with an unpleasant demise. Suddenly DeSharone was manager of the group and dealing with every facet of development. "I designed, programmed, wrote editing tools and engines, and hired and managed artists, programmers and audio engineers. We built *Laser Lords, Alice In Wonderland, Sargon Chess, Paint School I* and *II*, plus *Story Machine I* and *II*."

Unfortunately they weren't able to complete things in the allotted year. "I had originally planned to be at Spinnaker only one year as Philips was planning to release the machine in 1988. That one year turned into four, due to constant delays with the hardware emulation systems and the operating system. I think the launch was closer to 1991." This would prove to be one of Philips' biggest mistakes, since the late arrival meant NEC were first on the market with a CD console (PC-Engine CD-ROM 2), and by the time the CD-i was available other CD systems were either already available or soon to be released (Commodore





» Both *Ram Raid* and *Atlantis The Last Resort* set precedents. Both FPSs, *Raid* allowed online scoring and *Atlantis* loaded entire levels into memory, allowing the disc to be replaced with a music CD.



» Psycho assassin chicks in latex, and your partner-in-crime being shot in the back. *Burn:Cycle* was a surreal take on the cyberpunk genre.



CDTV, Sega CD, etc). DeSharone spoke further on such problems. "Unfortunately for Philips, as each year passed, CD technology made more inroads into being a standard part of the PC and Mac computers. And, while the PC was getting more memory and faster processors, Philips chose to stay with the original 1987 specification using the 68000 chip. This was the original 68000 found in the first Macintosh computers. It was dreadfully slow and severely limited what was possible with the system." So not only was the CD-i late, therefore missing a crucial market entry which may have saved it, the system was underpowered and overpriced. But Philips made further mistakes, the result being almost a comedy of errors.

Along with being comparatively underpowered, the CD-i had several inherent problems not anticipated by Philips. The late Silas Warner of Novalogic (*Super Mario's Wacky Worlds*), in an interview with www.blackmoonproject.co.uk, explained that the system should have been easy to work with. "I had just been laid off from Amiga and Atari work at Microprose. Since my previous work had been with the 68000, it wasn't hard to adjust to the crippled 68000 used in the CD-i. Like the Amiga, the CD-i had a 'display list' video structure in which every scan line was specified. The software architecture of the CD-i, in contrast, was wonderfully simple and elegant. The operating system was called OS9, and had the distinction that every program was relocatable." But Warner also had some surprising truths to reveal. "There were bugs and glitches. The scan line interrupt, normally the highest priority interrupt in the system, was overridden by the joystick. This meant the display would jump up and down whenever the joystick was moved. This required quite a bit of ingenuity to overcome, and a method was worked out at the CD-i development conference in the spring of 1992. This kind of 'patch' was an example of the kind of flexible programming that OS9 made possible." Luckily OS9 enabled a solution, but it's shocking that months after the launch developers had to find workarounds for crippled hardware.

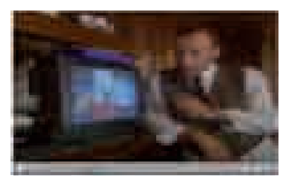
Meanwhile DeSharone, who headed arguably one of the most technically skilled CD-i teams at Animation Magic, also had problems. "There was no hardware sprite technology so all movement of characters required the pushing of pixel data by that 68000 chip. There was some hardware scrolling capability but the video memory was very small. If you look at the scrolling in *Laser Lords*, *Alice In Wonderland*, *Mutant Rampage*, *Link* or *Zelda* you'll see that you can only scroll about 2 or 2.5 screens horizontally. This was dictated by the video memory available. The remote control was analogue instead of digital and the infrared made it extremely slow and unresponsive. The CD drive was single speed (1x) with really abysmal seek times. There was also the issue of the small Non Volatile Ram Card – you had a system which may have been better suited to large RPG or Strategy Games, but couldn't easily save complex game states."

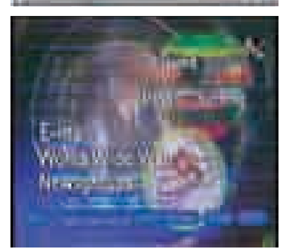
Then Warner elaborated ad-nauseam on his problems, including Philips' gross short-sightedness regarding audio. "The most serious problems were audio. Since the CD-i was based on a CD player, its designers felt CDs should be sufficient for all audio. But the designers forgot to add any method to mix sounds. Even a simple mouse click had to be recorded in a studio, according to CD-quality specifications, including $9000 digitising boards with gold-plated cables, to 16-bit quality. But then the CD music was interrupted to play the click, for only one track could be played at a time!" The convoluted actions taken to remedy this beggar belief, and highlight the kind of problems developers faced. "Once again, the programming 'brain trust' went into action and figured out a massive software package that at least allowed two tracks to be played. A software compressor decompressed two audio tracks at once, and averaged them from stereo to mono. Then one was placed on the left channel of the rotating audio buffer and the other on the right channel. Finally the stereo option was turned off, in order to mix the two channels. For all its ingenuity, this programming trick turned out to be the Achilles heel of the CD-i."

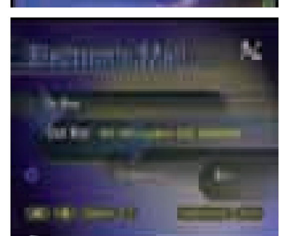
Warner also detailed the first game he did for Novalogic, which not only explains the problem with the new sound technique, but also the kinds of demented pressure Sony was applying. "Novalogic was mainly a contract programming house building games designed by clients. Our title, *Jigsaw*, had been completely designed and specified by Sony. New age music played while you switched identically-shaped

Online, but out of time?

The CD-i may not have been the first console to go online (that title falls to the Famicom), but it did have an impressively ambitious attempt at doing things. Unlike past console attempts, which in hindsight appear technically limited, the CD-i attempted to bring proper internet browsing to your TV screen. CD-Online launched in the UK in October 1995, with the Internet Kit costing £99 plus an added flat fee of £11.99 per month – in order to work though, it required the DVC. To advertise the new service, Philips commissioned a lengthy advert featuring a barman, Dave, enthusing about the service and the ability to go shopping, chat with people, check out films, books and so on, plus find love via the online dating service. One game, *Ram Raid*, even allowed the downloading of new levels and featured an online scoreboard to compete via. A bit like Xbox Live, then. The domain is dormant, but still exists at www.cd-online.co.uk.





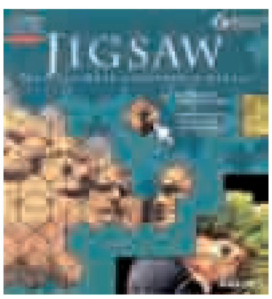




"A CD-I 2 WAS ON THE DRAWING BOARD AND PHILIPS EVEN COMMISSIONED ARGONAUT TO PRODUCE THE 3D PROCESSOR" DEVIN SHOCKWELL



» An advert by Philips. It's witty, maybe even funny, but what the hell is it advertising? No wonder people didn't understand the CD-i.

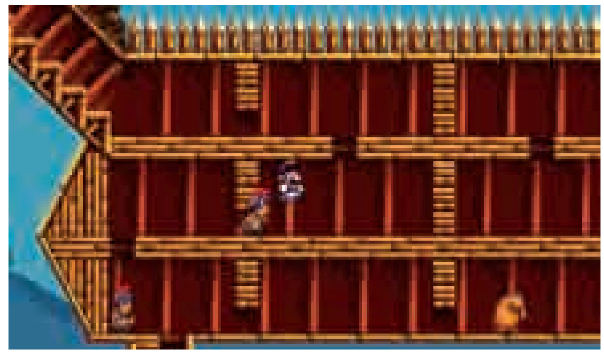


» Who would have imagined that *Jigsaw*, and those three rotating sound buffers, could cause so many problems? It was designed by Sony, launching with the system, but people hated it.

pieces of a picture until all were in place. The obstacles thrown in our way were primarily Sony's ridiculous requirements for quality. For instance, that mouse click. It couldn't be a synthetic beep; it had to be recorded in a recording studio, to 16-bit quality! Also, [all game data] had to be placed on the disk twice. I still have a test disk from Sony, on which nail polish had been placed to obliterate several tracks. The game was required to play perfectly even with this flaw! Two weeks before the opening [we realised] *Jigsaw* would ship with the new machine, despite Sony's QA department continuing to discover new 'bugs.' Up until then, Sony players were the only model on which we could test products. Then Panasonic came out with its companion model, and *Jigsaw* wouldn't run! The culprit was that elaborate sound mixing system. The software decompressor had to load sound data in a precise timing sequence into two rotating sound buffers. But the Panasonic player had three rotating sound buffers, throwing all timing off. Every title that had more than one sound playing produced garble on the players. Two weeks before its release, half the supply of CD-i players in the world had to be scrapped and redesigned!"

Another gentleman responsible for games, Steve Hayes, formerly of Philips Interactive Media Europe, also spoke on the subject. It turns out Philips' documentation was nearly useless to solve problems. "PIME had commissioned a number of post-production houses to develop CD-i titles. Whilst these were strong on the video and audio production-side, many were less adept at solving some of the early technical 'gotchas' that couldn't always be unearthed from simply reading the Green book. Also, there was difficulty in circulating good 'how to' tricks and shortcuts." This forced programmers to become binary guerrillas and invent things as they went along, quick-fixing and hot-patching code just to maintain functionality, with Hayes revealing some unorthodox methods. "Most development tools that make a coder's life easy didn't exist. We had to either create them, or hunt down something vaguely useful and adaptable by searching online through the arcane academic backwaters of what's now the internet."

But once past such hurdles, what were the games actually like? At first very slow, the majority being pretty uninteresting. Warner recounts the public's reaction to *Jigsaw*, "The premiere came, and CD-i displays were prominently unveiled in prestigious department and electronics stores



» *Super Mario's Wacky Worlds* is another unfinished game. Having played it, Retro Gamer can personally attest to its excellence – a surprisingly authentic *Mario* experience.

throughout the nation. Many of them were running *Jigsaw*, because nothing else was available. And the public resoundingly ignored them." The system's US launch was in 1991, arriving in the UK March the following year. It wasn't until 1993 that faster and more exciting games arrived, with shoot-'em-ups like *Alien Gate* and *Steel Machine*, plus of course the two brilliant side-scrolling *Link* and *Zelda* games. *Alien Gate* actually started as a demo from SPC Vision, but Philips was so impressed it released it – a five game contract was also created, which eventually led to one of the CD-i's crowning glories, *The Apprentice*.

But why did it take so long for them to push the gaming side of the machine? DeSharone was hesitant of speaking too openly, but revealed some of the things at Philips which would eventually lead to the CD-i's downfall. "It was just obviously not a game system and Philips was actually very clear in telling us that it didn't believe the market for this device was games. There was a subtle hostility toward games that I noticed from the upper echelon of execs at AIM (Philips' CD-i software publishing arm). Philips thought that people would buy the machine for home educational purposes." During the conversation DeSharone explained that most executives had no background in gaming, and so didn't really understand the market. He went on, "This all changed after the launch of the CD-i because the only titles that actually sold were the game titles! I'm not sure how familiar you are with the original CD-i launch titles but titles like *Treasures Of The Smithsonian* had multi-million dollar budgets while games like *Laser Lords* were closer to $700,000."

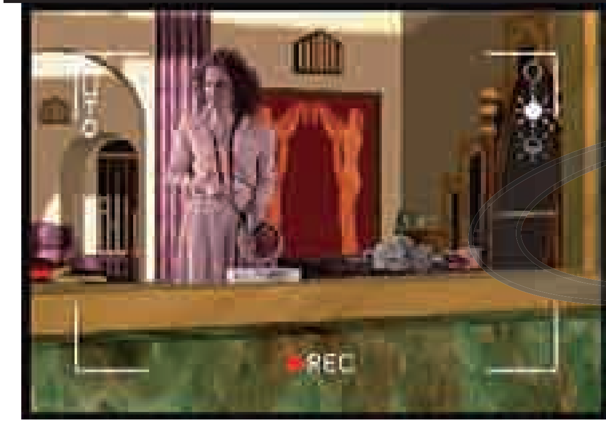
Clearly Philips didn't understand its own machine. It didn't understand the capabilities, nor did it understand what consumers would want from such high priced technology. Because of this it misfired horribly. The entire marketing strategy lacked focus, weighed down by a high retail price, and consumers became confused as to what they were buying. Legend has it, from inside sources at Philips who cannot be named due to non-disclosure contracts, that overall the company spent one billion dollars on the CD-i. While seemingly a massive figure, when you consider Philips was paying for hardware development and manufacturing, exorbitantly expensive software development (under the failed Philips Media brand), advertising and publicity, not to mention the creation of several magazines, the cost is not surprising;



» Issue 18 of CDi magazine featured a review and cover of *Discworld*, which was never officially released.



» Undoubtedly Sony learned valuable lessons working on CD-i, later helping shape its strategy for the PlayStation. Pictured: The portable IVO-V11 model, launched in 1993, from £1,299.



» Sit in a hotel room and spy on some rich and powerful freaks. *Voyeur* may have had an unnecessarily seedy reputation, but it proved rather entertaining.



» A sequel, *Voyeur II*, was completed but never released. Major CD-i collectors have acquired the first disc, but the second is still MIA.

Sony spent twice as much getting the original PlayStation off the ground, showing just how painful this stage of disc media was.

The magazine point is interesting, since it's believed Philips funded the majority of CD-i magazines, though didn't want anyone to know this. CD-i archivist Devin Shockwell explained more. "The earliest attempt at a CD-i publication was the inspirationally titled 'CD-i' which was terrible, reading like a catalogue. The most important was a UK based 'CDi Magazine' which ran for 20 issues and took an in-depth look at VCD, Music CD, Edutainment etc. CDi ran for 20 issues and its USA sister publication named after it ran for five issues taking articles directly from the UK publication. The other magazines named CD-i are completely unrelated, the most respected was the Netherland CD-i magazine which lived a long life! Spain, France and the Netherlands all had unique publications. The latter is worth special mention as it stayed the complete course of CD-i from birth to death. Finally, CD-i World was a professional newspaper style journal publication aimed at developers."

When examining the most technically impressive games to gauge the system's abilities, to average consumers it came across as less powerful but more expensive than even a Mega Drive, with the added problem of originally only having two dedicated action buttons (less than a NES, though later pads added more) – to give this impression in 1992, coupled with unfocused marketing, was a death sentence. While outside of Holland the distribution is regarded as poor (especially so in the USA).

Which is a shame, because in many ways it was a pioneer that deserved to fair better. The CD-i had a working internet browser years before the Dreamcast (see boxout). More importantly, it was a region-free and open system to develop for – a stark contrast to rival Japanese consoles, which required expensive licences to create games on. It was also a console with integrated multimedia capabilities years before the PS2 was praised for playing DVD films. The CD-i's Video CD playback is actually very good, and with third world countries still mass-producing VCDs (of recent films) at piracy-low prices, it's a handy system to own. But only if it has a Digital Video Card, which was another thing that put people off – no one wants to buy expensive extras just to attain basic functionality. The DVC was always planned but they hadn't finalised the format, which is why it was available as a costly upgrade after launch. FMV games obviously wouldn't run without it, while later titles (like *Mutant Rampage*) required the extra memory to function. The system was practically crippled until you bought a DVC.

But for the eventual owners there wasn't anything intrinsically wrong with the machine – once it had a DVC installed and finally started seeing decent software. Rather it was what you received for the high price compared to rival games systems which was the problem. As mentioned by developers, the biggest hits were not the educational or multimedia titles but games. That was what the public wanted, but when gamers and parents were looking at prospective machines in the early 1990s, CD-i didn't stand a chance against technologically superior and cheaper competitors. Although, Philips actually considered releasing follow-up hardware. Shockwell, who has an army of inside contacts, revealed "I know that a CD-i 2 was on the drawing board and Philips even commissioned Argonaut (Super FX Chip guys) to produce the 3D processor. It's said it would have outstripped the power of PlayStation, but at a price."

The last games officially released through Philips Media were the impressive *Atlantis* and *Zenith*. Other Games still appeared though; *The Lost Ride* was released in 1998, while *Solar Crusade* came out in 1999. Fan-promoted releases include *Plunderball* and *Jack Sprite Vs The Crimson Ghost* (oldergames.com) among others.

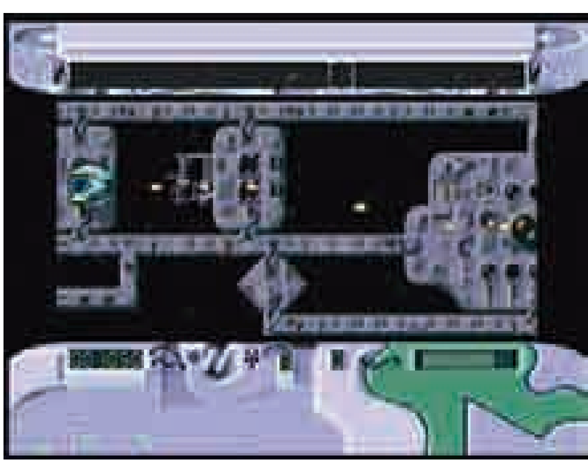
With rock-bottom prices, VCD movie playback, easy availability on eBay, countless online resources (including reviews with the benefit of hindsight), the ability to easily copy games with a CD burner, and to re-iterate, really low prices, now is a wonderful time to try the CD-i. Buy one with some of its best games, a DVC, decent pad and lightgun, then sit back and indulge in fun titles which few have taken the time to enjoy.

Author of the CD-i emulator speaks!

I'm a former CD-i developer (no names!) and saw this as a cool hobby project. When I first started programming in December 2000 I didn't foresee the amount of work the project would take. I dropped it for almost a year – this happened a number of times. But I always came back to the project, managing to get the first CD-i title to play somewhere around Christmas 2004. After that I have pretty much worked on it steadily. A secondary reason was my great love for the CD-i platform, and the consequent desire to see it live on beyond the lifetime of the discs and players. So far, most CD-i hardware has held up admirably, but at some point it's going fail, and what would happen to all those discs then? An emulator is a beautiful solution to the problem and also really the only worthy one. Hardware dies; software lives forever (through emulation)!



All in-game screens and interview answers courtesy of www.blackmoonproject.co.uk, with the exception of the Dale DeSharone segments. Special thanks to Devin Shockwell for providing the hardware to photograph.



» C64 fans will want to check out *Steel Machine* – a Uridium clone on CD-i is definitely something to get excited about.



PHILIPS CD-i

PERFECT TEN GAMES

Clever wags will no doubt suggest that a CD-i top ten is rather pointless as it was home to a load of worthless crap. Luckily, we tend to give clever wags a wide berth and were more than happy to dig through the CD-i's rather extensive back catalogue and prove them wrong. Just remember though, it's opinion only and no harm is ever meant.



01

THE APPRENTICE

- » **RELEASED:** 1994
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** PHILIPS MEDIA
- » **CREATED BY:** SPC VISION/THE VISION FACTORY
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ALIEN GATE

01 **No top 10 is complete without a decent platform game; thankfully CD-i doesn't disappoint offering *The Apprentice* as an instant classic.** It's hard not to fall in love with the cute cartoon animations as you control Marvin (the wizards apprentice) through six unique stages. Beautifully animated cutscenes, bonus levels and boss encounters only add to an already lavish production. If you were lucky enough to own the Digital Video Cartridge upgrade, the game featured improved sound effects – creating a rich diverse audiovisual treat. They even threw in a hidden mini-game of *Space Invaders* affectionately called 'Marvinvaders' not to mention those Game Over screens!

PLUNDERBALL

- » **RELEASED:** 2002
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** OLDERGAMES
- » **CREATED BY:** ISG PRODUCTIONS
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** VIDEO SPEEDWAY

02 **It's pinball Jim but not quite as we know it!** If we described it as pinball fused with *Wing Commander* you'd have a rough idea of what to expect. Alongside typical pinball elements such as drop targets, bumpers and alleys, *Plunderball* also features video lock wells. Once activated these show brief video clips of the storyline with hints on how to progress through the table. This serves as nice decoration but what really makes this game shine is the solid and thoroughly playable pinball physics. It's even more staggering to learn that this was saved from oblivion thanks to the retro publisher Oldergames, which released three CD-i titles alongside *Plunderball* in 2002.


02

PAC-PANIC

- » **RELEASED:** 1995
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** PHILIPS MEDIA
- » **CREATED BY:** NAMCO [CONVERTED BY PHILIPS ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT]
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ARCADE CLASSICS [THE CONVERSION BY PHILIPS ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT]

03 **What is a conversion doing in this section, we hear you cry?** It's simply the best version we've played, lovingly recreated with a glorious 256 colour palette. With standard, puzzle and two-player modes, there's plenty of replay value to be had. Although many were left bemused by the animated menu system, which looked like regional savings to us, this shouldn't detract from the superb conversion as the team from ADS show how a conversion should be done.

HOTEL MARIO

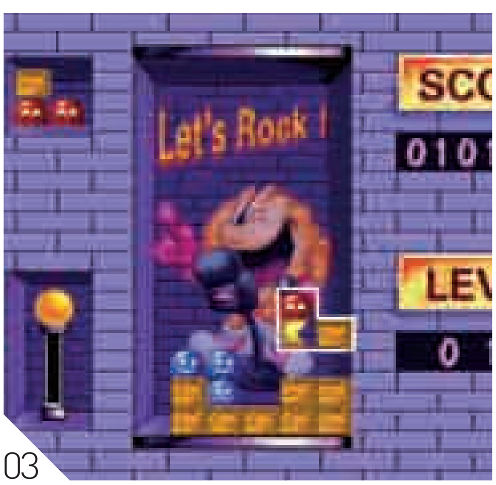
- » **RELEASED:** 1994
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** PHILIPS MEDIA
- » **CREATED BY:** FANTASY FACTORY
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NAME THAT TUNE

04 **Forget what you've read or seen about *Hotel Mario.*** This is a brilliant multi-tiered platform romp, which feels like the old school style of gameplay from Mario's first appearance in *Donkey Kong*. But instead of jumping barrels and climbing ladders, Mario is thrust into various themed hotels where traversing elevators and shutting all the doors is key to success. With Koopas, Goombas and Wrigglers to contend with, this is no easy challenge. Simple, effective gameplay and surely that's what a *Mario* game is all about. Terrific use of the Nintendo licence and well worth a second chance!

BRAIN DEAD 13

- » **RELEASED:** 1997
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** PHILIPS MEDIA
- » **CREATED BY:** READYSOFT [CONVERTED BY INTERNATIONAL CREATIVE DIGITAL IMAGE]
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SPACE ACE [CONVERSION BY INTERNATIONAL CREATIVE DIGITAL IMAGE]

05 **To those bored of the Full Motion Video adventure created by *Dragon's Lair* and its ilk, *Brain Dead 13* is a refreshing alternative.** An FMV game with infinite lives and infinite ways to die! It's just as well with a half-human half-pet called Fritz and his assortment of weapons baying for blood! With multiple paths there's plenty to explore offering a furious action adventure game. All the splendour of the enhanced Digital Video from CD-i makes this a real treat.



03


04


05




06



07


08

BURN: CYCLE

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHED BY:** PHILIPS MEDIA
» **CREATED BY:** TRIPMEDIA
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** THE VIRTUAL NIGHTCLUB

06 The mere mention of CD-i gaming to most retro rebates should bring *Burn: Cycle* to mind. It was the poster child of Philips Media Games and its debut on CD-i provided the system a much-needed boost. Fully digitised action sequences set in a surreal 3D cyber punk environment coupled with an intriguing storyline, make this an enduring adventure. Filled with puzzles, shooting sections and character interaction there was plenty of variation. The European release came in an embossed lime green case with an excellent soundtrack CD. It appealed to a core gaming demographic that CD-i had never reached before.

RAM RAID

» **RELEASED:** 1996
» **PUBLISHED BY:** PHILIPS MEDIA
» **CREATED BY:** PHILIPS ADVANCED DEVELOPMENT AND SUPPORT/ PHILIPS RESEARCH LABORATORIES
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ATLANTIS – THE LAST RESORT

07 Criticised for lacking processing power, it was astonishing to find the technically demanding genre of FPSs on CD-i. But that's what the creative force of Philips ADS and PRL pulled off. The game was called *Ram Raid*. They not only developed an FPS, but also integrated online capabilities with a competitive scoreboard, and downloadable content. Both components were to provide a killer application for the CD-online service. Best of all, it was free! At least to CD-online subscribers. The game was also distributed as a covermount on CDi magazine for all to enjoy.

MUTANT RAMPAGE: BODYSLAM

» **RELEASED:** 1994
» **PUBLISHED BY:** PHILIPS MEDIA
» **CREATED BY:** ANIMATION MAGIC
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** SARGON CHESS, ZELDA: WOG

08 There's one thing you can be sure of: CD-i games never follow the typical blue print of a genre. *Mutant Rampage* might look like a *Double Dragon* clone, but it's a far more imaginative brawler. It's set in a post-apocalyptic vision of Earth, where cybernetic technology has advanced and blurred the line between man and machine. This vision and art direction is highly polished, complimented by a superb soundtrack. Digital video animation interludes courtesy of the Bodyslam host L.Wolf Jam serve to taunt and reward, creating a vibrant world. Omission of a two-player mode is the only missed opportunity.


09

SECRET MISSION

» **RELEASED:** 1996
» **PUBLISHED BY:** PHILIPS MEDIA
» **CREATED BY:** MICROÏDS
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** ULTIMATE DOMAIN

09 We could have listed *The 7th Guest* but it's this charming adventure game that really deserves your attention. It's the Fifties and you find yourself in the Indo-Chinese country of Opalia, a hot spot in the cold war. Conveniently awaking in a hotel with amnesia (the crux of many an adventure) you soon become embroiled within *Secret Mission's* political intrigue and mystery. Exploring the detailed world of *Secret Mission* is a delight with some spectacular, vivid animations breathing life into the varied locations. Although navigating this world proves a little cumbersome at first, this is a small concession for the finely honed, clutter free user interface. This is one spy thriller worth further investigation.

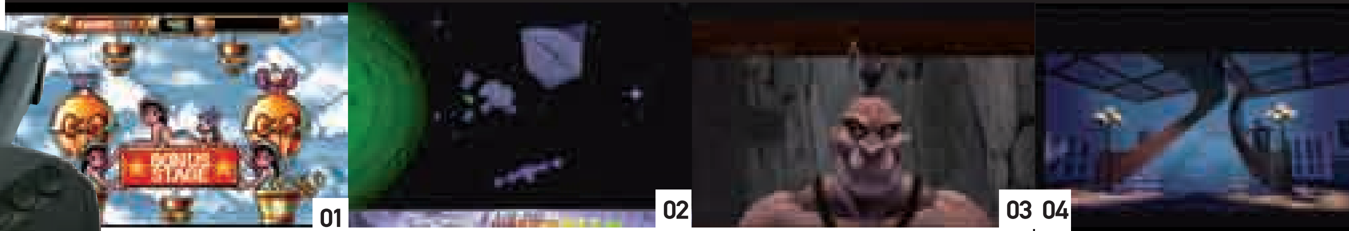
LINK: FOE/ZELDA: WOG

» **RELEASED:** 1993
» **PUBLISHED BY:** PHILIPS MEDIA
» **CREATED BY:** SPINNAKER SOFTWARE
» **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** LASER LORDS, MUTANT RAMPAGE

10 It's been said before, but it has to be said again. The two sidescrolling games, *Link: The Faces Of Evil* and *Zelda: The Wand Of Gamelon,* are astoundingly good. Ignore the lies perpetuated about these Nintendo-licensed adventures since, although they aren't strictly canonical, the sense of exploration and gradual empowerment (via *Metroid*vania-style item acquisition) is exhilarating. The Russian-made cinemas may have been low-quality, but the gameplay designs, music, and Monet-esque background art were all superb. Give them another chance and play with an open mind, since there are some great games trying to break out. Oh, and stay away from the third, top-down *Zelda's Adventure* title – now that was dire.

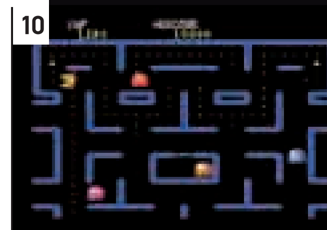

10





PHILIPS CD-i and the rest...

Often mistaken for playing nothing more than interactive edutainment titles, Philips' CD-i did have some decent titles available amongst all the rubbish. Some of the best and worst titles can be found over the following two pages.



01 THE APPRENTICE
02 KETHER
03 LOST EDEN
04 THE 7TH GUEST
05 DIMO'S QUEST
06 BURN:CYCLE
07 POWER HITTER
08 CREATURE SHOCK
09 SARGON CHESS
10 ARCADE CLASSICS
11 SHAOLIN'S ROAD
12 THUNDER IN PARADISE
13 L'AFFAIRE MORLOV
14 LUCKY LUKE – THE VIDEO GAME
15 ACCELERATOR
16 AXIS AND ALLIES
17 BIG BANG SHOW
18 CAESARS WORLD OF BOXING
19 CHAOS CONTROL
20 SPORT FREAKS
21 GOLDEN OLDIES VOLUME II
22 THE LOST RIDE
23 VEGAS GIRLS
24 WHACK A BUBBLE
25 HOTEL MARIO
26 WHO SHOT JOHNNY ROCK?
27 ZELDA'S ADVENTURE
28 WORDPLAY
29 HIEROGLYPH
30 GOLDEN OLDIES VOLUME I
31 STEEL MACHINE
32 SOLAR CRUSADE
33 BRAIN DEAD 13
34 CHRISTMAS COUNTRY
35 DOMINO
36 PAC-PANIC
37 MEGA MAZE
38 VIDEO SPEEDWAY
39 SPACE ACE
40 TETSUO GAIDEN
41 BACKGAMMON
42 TETRIS
43 LEMMINGS
44 UNCOVER FEATURING TATJANA
45 LABYRINTH OF CRETE
46 RISE OF THE ROBOTS
47 ZENITH
48 MERLIN'S APPRENTICE
49 DRAGON'S LAIR II
50 THE LAST BOUNTY HUNTER
51 CLUEDO THE MYSTERIES CONTINUE
52 LINGO
53 MYST
54 SCOTLAND YARD
55 INCA
56 MUTANT RAMPAGE: BODYSLAM
57 WORLD CUP GOLF
58 CAESARS WORLD OF GAMBLING
59 ULTRA CD-I SOCCER
60 FAMILY GAMES I
61 CRIME PATROL
62 MAD DOG MCCREE
63 ALICE IN WONDERLAND
64 INTERNATIONAL TENNIS OPEN
65 KINGDOM: THE FAR REACHES
66 A GREAT DAY AT THE RACES
67 LASER LORDS
68 ZELDA: THE WAND OF GAMELON
69 ALIEN GATE
70 GREAT AMERICAN GOLF 1
71 MASTER LABYRINTH
72 LITIL DIVIL
73 STRIKER PRO
74 ATLANTIS – THE LAST RESORT
75 FAMILY GAMES II
76 MONTY PYTHON'S INVASION FROM THE PLANET SKYRON
77 DRAGON'S LAIR
78 MICRO MACHINES
79 SECRET MISSION
80 CD SHOOT
81 THE PALM SPRINGS OPEN
82 VOYEUR
83 MAD DOG II: THE LOST GOLD
84 EARTH COMMAND
85 DRUG WARS
86 CHRISTMAS CRISIS
87 FLASHBACK




05
06
07
08 09
11
12
13
14 15
SALOON
20
1988
1904
21
22
23 24
29
30
31
32 33
38
39
250
40
41 42
47
48
49
50 51
56
57
58
59 60
65
66
67
68 69
74
75
76
PHILIPS
77 78
83
84
WORLD
85
86 87



MORTAL KOMBAT

SPINE-RIPPINGLY GOOD



- **PUBLISHER:** MIDWAY
- **RELEASED:** 1992
- **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** 50p A GO

HISTORY



Mortal Kombat in the arcades is a bit like the Kennedy assassination: everyone knows where they were when they first saw it in action, and the first time they witnessed another player perform a fatality. For me it was on a trip to the cinema and, while I can't remember what film I saw (possibly *Batman Returns*), I vividly recall seeing a new cabinet displayed in the mini-arcade outside. Two other youngsters were engaged in a tense bout, which finished with Scorpion ripping the skin from his face, followed by a fierce looking skull spewing flames and burning the unlucky opponent to a crispy skeleton. Little did I realise, but a whole new era in videogames had begun, an era where ultra-violence sells and shock tactics are the order of the day.

Of course, *Mortal Kombat* was never that great a game. A shallower experience than *Street Fighter II* it was sold on the back of all that gore, the highlight being the difficult Fatalities. Read that word again: Fatalities. Seeing those ten letters should erupt waves of nostalgia, of eagerly wasting pocket change in an attempt to pull them off and impress onlookers. It was a cultural phenomenon in the gaming world, and it's a special feeling knowing you were there, at that point in time, contributing to the global atmosphere.

Now, in all likelihood, few have probably seen all the fatalities that the first iteration contained. So for maximum viewing pleasure, look to the right and find each of the death moves in all their gory splendour – except for Liu Kang's "spinning-kick-followed-by-an-uppercut" fatality, since it was rubbish. Otherwise there's Cage punching a head clean off; Kano infamously ripping a still beating heart from someone's chest; Raiden's lightning head-explosion; the aforementioned Scorpian skull flambeau; Sonia's burning kiss-of-death; and finally our favourite (hence why it's so prominently displayed), Sub-Zero ripping off the head of his opponent, with spine left dangling in the wind. FINISH HIM!


347000
SUB-ZERO
0000
LIU KANG
RAIDEN WINS



SEGA'S PHANTASY STAR HAS GONE THROUGH ONE OF THE MOST SIGNIFICANT METAMORPHOSIS OF ANY RPG FRANCHISE. SINCE FIRST APPEARING ON THE SEGA MASTER SYSTEM, IT HAS TRANSFORMED INTO SOMETHING THAT IS NOW VIRTUALLY UNRECOGNISABLE FROM THE ORIGINAL 8-BIT GAME. MIKE TOOLEY TALKS TO SEVERAL PHANTASY STAR DEVELOPERS AND DISCOVERS HOW THE EVOLUTION OF THIS SUCCESSFUL SERIES HAS OFTEN GONE HAND IN HAND WITH SEGA'S OWN TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES OF THE TIME.

THE COMPLETE LOWDOWN

PHANTASY STAR

1987-2006

P*hantasy Star* started life way back in 1987. Sega's perennial RPG was crafted and sold as the best reason to buy the Master System, with Sega aiming to take on Nintendo's all-conquering NES. Even by Sega's standards it was a bold design brief, and, despite the odds, it was almost fulfilled. *Phantasy Star* would become one of Sega's biggest console franchises, though at the time this was almost unimaginable. The story of the *Phantasy Star* series, lying as close to Sega's internal machismo as it did, serves to chronicle the Sega legend itself. With each instalment of *Phantasy Star* something new was added to the RPG genre or to the technology of the time. The series has brought Sega success and awards, but along the way, as has so often been the case, the Japanese giant has suffered for its art.

By 1986 the Japanese games industry had really hit its stride. Gamers the world over were enjoying stellar arcade titles from the likes of Taito and Capcom; hits like *Bubble Bobble* and *Strider* were heavy on character art and gameplay, and proved to be instantly popular. Sega, though, was in a different league altogether.

Having recently been successfully floated on the Japanese stock market its arcade games, like *After Burner* and *Space Harrier*, were a tour de force of speed and pyrotechnics – they were bolstered by the raw power of custom hardware and cabinets that had no equal at that time. Thanks largely to the formidable Isao Otiawo's drive for growth and the talents of the Sega arcade teams and their leader Yu Suzuki, in the arcades, Sega was unstoppable.

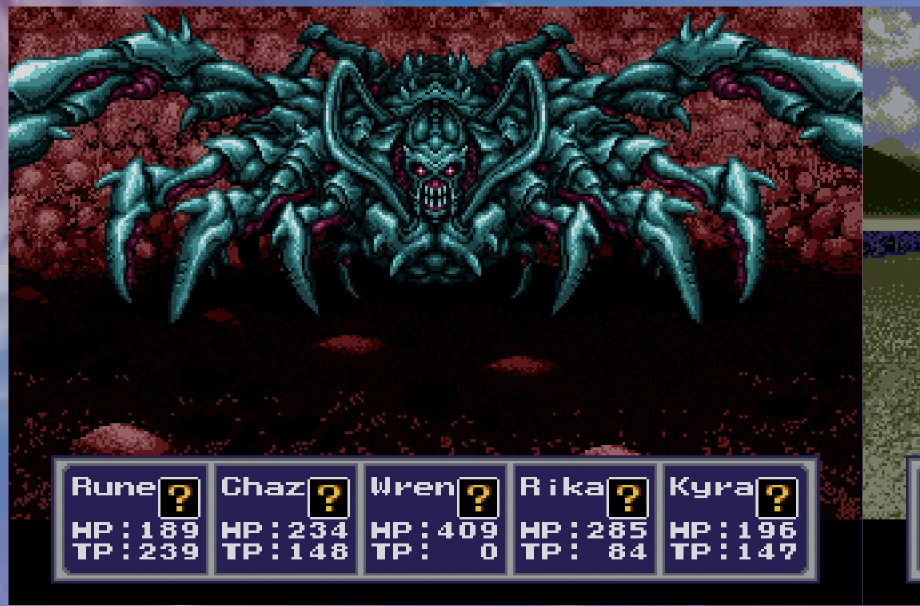
However, in the home computer and console market Sega wasn't having much success at all, and it was Nintendo and its aforementioned NES that was enjoying the lion's share of gamers' money.

Isao Otiawo wasn't prepared to give up on this lucrative market though. Moderate success was previously achieved through Sega's range of SG1-3000 computers, with some of its hardware being used in the then current Master System architecture – Otiawo knew that the hardware was good, and was acutely aware of the problems facing Sega's overseas competitors.

So from 1986 to 1996 Sega ran a club called S.P.E.C. (The Sega Players Enjoy Club). Spec's membership consisted

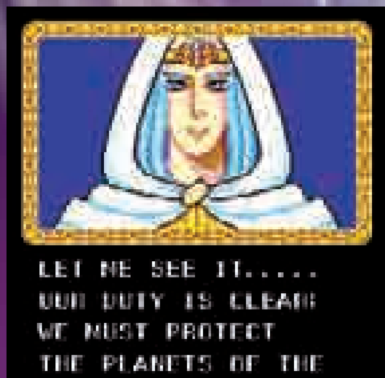


THE COMPLETE LOWDOWN



MAGNIFICENT

One of the many new and innovative features that *Phantasy Star* brought to the series was the ability to nurture a support character that would assist the player on their quest. Mags as they were known were either found or traded with other players. They needed constant feeding but like all living things would thrive and grow based on the food they were given. If a mag's diet consisted of recovery foods then it would have healing bias, likewise if a mag was fed on magic recovery foods or photon drops it would become aggressive. Mags had three evolutions: its original state; at level 20 it would split in two; the third evolution happened depending on character and mag class but defined the mag's attributes and photon attacks. Mags took their power from photon damage taken by the player in battle – once the power bar hit 100 it was ready to send off its photon blast.



» Noah or Lutz as he would later be know, provided a great source of debate regarding the chronology of *Phantasy Star*.



» Odin was the universe's first real hero. When we first encounter Odin he is a stone statue; Myau get Alis to help restore Odin.

of Sega staff and fans alike, giving the developers a chance to speak to fans about their work and vice versa. The format was honest and open; looking back, this was perhaps the industry's first iteration of a focus group. The idea of S.P.E.C. repaid Sega well when it wanted to know why Sega arcade gamers were playing on Nintendo's NES at home. The Nintendo Entertainment System was dominant in Japan and North America, but at that time had few spectacular games, whereas the Master System had accurate home versions of Sega's burgeoning arcade catalogue.

The results of the S.P.E.C. survey told Otiawo all he needed to know: the most anticipated game of the year was *Dragon's Quest 3:* a NES exclusive! *Dragon's Quest, Final Fantasy* and *Ultima* appeared to be the difference – three massive franchises, three massive RPGs. All exclusive to Nintendo consoles and Sega had nothing to offer that was even slightly similar.

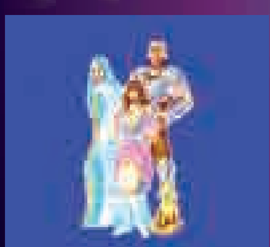
It was the decade of *Dungeons & Dragons* and Otiawo wasn't about to let Sega miss the adventure. And so it was that he assembled a team of talented individuals from within Sega to produce its very first RPG.

AM8, as it was to be known, started as a disparate group of talent and drew little interest from the other teams at Sega at the time. Ironically, *Phantasy Star* the game would bestow success on all who were involved with it. Yuji Naka was to cut his teeth designing a game world, something that had eluded him up until this point (most of Naka's previous portfolio at Sega was made up of home conversions of Yu Suzuki's arcade games). As Naka's idol and mentor, without even being connected to the project, Yu Suzuki's influence would be felt throughout the *Phantasy Star* universe. Yuji Naka was joined by Reiko Kodama who had started with Sega in 1984 and was no stranger to success thanks to her work on the arcade title *Ninja Princess* and the Master System's flagship title *Alex Kidd In Miracle World* – responsible for overall game design she would eventually persuade Naka to develop the 3D engine that would make *Phantasy Star* stand apart from its competitors. Joining the senior Kodama was Naota Oshima, again tasked with overall game design – his contributions were to make Naka and Kodama's ideas a reality. Of most significance to the franchise though was the inclusion of two others not directly involved with creating the game: enter Miki Morimoto and Tokuhiko Uwabo.

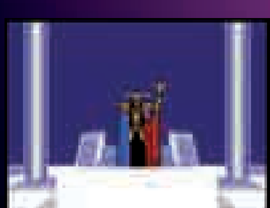
Morimoto had been around Sega for a couple of years at this point; he had joined to become part of the arcade division. Sadly, this opportunity didn't present itself for Morimoto, so he continued to work somewhat begrudgingly in the home entertainment sector. His career high at this point was to be director of the seminal *Ys*.

Morimoto was a big player within S.P.E.C. and his mandate for *Phantasy Star* was to ensure that the gamers got exactly what they asked for without recreating the Greek legend of Homer. As for Uwabo, his job was to score the works of the team and provide a suitable set of sound effects – not an easy transition when your previous musical scores have been for fast, action arcade games like *After Burner* and *Space Harrier*.

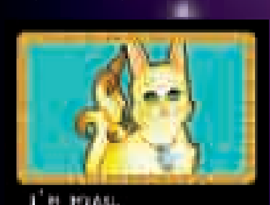
With the team members in place, it was time to create the game. "I don't really remember all the details, but Yuji Naka indicated basic concept with game style, while each team member broke this down further to eventually create *Phantasy Star*'s design," begins Reiko Kodama. "We wanted a game that was unlike any other consumer RPG that was out there. We thought the 3D dungeons in PC games were interesting, and detailed event scenes would be a unique way to convey the story – two features that weren't in any other console RPGs at the time. The game's mix of sci-fi and fantasy setting was also part of this desire to create a unique RPG," she continued.



» This where it started, innocence abounds.



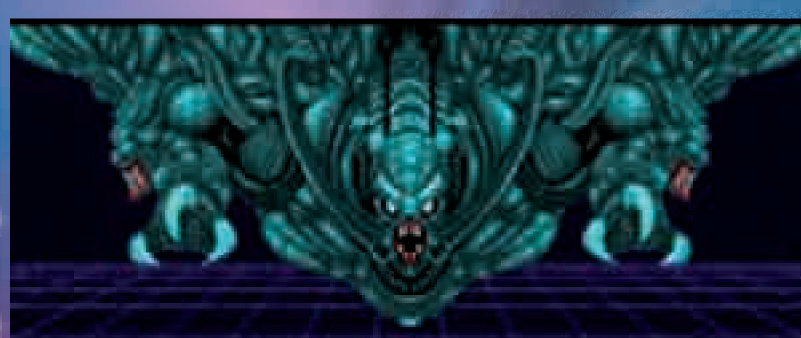
» The first *Phantasy Star* villain. The once magnanimous King Lassic.



» Don't be fooled, despite having no finger, Myau was an amazing asset to the party.



» The first time incarnation of Dark Falz as seen in *PS1*.



» Dark Falz gets stronger through each game and became a much tougher proposition each time.



» **Above left and right:** By *Phantasy Star 4* Dark Falz had evolved again. And by *Phantasy Star Online* Dark Falz had evolved into one of the most spectacular bosses to be seen on a videogame.

With the game skeleton created, it fell to the designers and programmers to add flesh to the bones. Development gathered at pace and at this point the game really started to take shape.

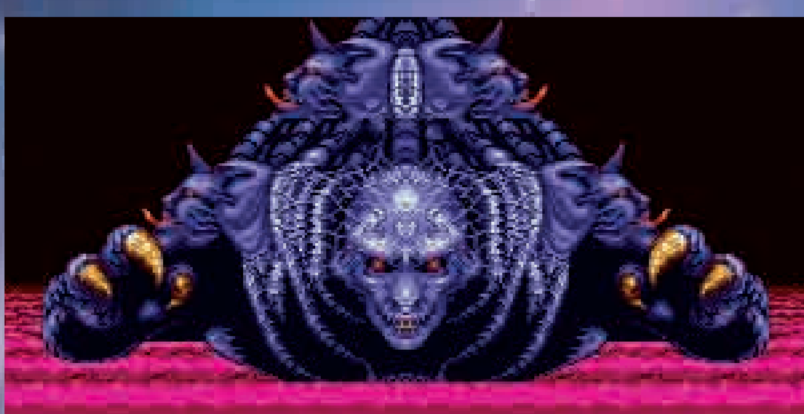
Oshima and Reiko were determined to have their 3D dungeons and event scenes and as such tasked Naka with developing a 3D engine for the Master System, asking him to use all that he had learnt from the Yu Suzuki code he had seen as a conversion programmer. Naka rose to the challenge and delivered an engine that was beyond the then known threshold of Sega's 8-bit console. The same incentive was applied to Tokuhiko Uwabo for making *Phantasy Star*'s soundtrack. "How would you have approached this in the arcade division?" was the question that was asked. The answer would hit gamers in the pocket as Tokuhiko did exactly what the arcade division would do: increase the spec of the hardware. So Otiawo green-lighted the incomplete *Phantasy Star* to have its own FM sound chip built into the cartridge. This wasn't all though – to accommodate the 3D sections *Phantasy Star* would need a bigger cartridge. Again the team were told, "whatever it takes". As *Phantasy Star* took shape and the story line progressed it was decided that the lead character should be female. "Back then the idea of a female hero was practically unheard of," continues Kodama. "We wanted to do things that hadn't been done before, like animated monsters and 3D dungeons, so the idea of a female came naturally; we thought it would be an interesting change."

Phantasy Star eventually shipped on 20 December 1987 and launched to expectant Japanese gamers on a cartridge weighing in at 8-mega bits, some 16 times the size of a standard Master System cartridge. It also came with the aforementioned built-in FM Chip and the console's first in-built cartridge save system – all in all a fitting swansong as the last game released on the MK1 Master System.

Set on the planet Palma, *Phantasy Star* followed the story of Alis Landale as she ses out to avenge her brother's death and free her people from the corrupt rule of King Lassic. Interestingly, as the story unfolds Lassic is shown as a magnanimous and fair leader, who has been corrupted by a demon called Dark Force. Dark Force we would learn later would be the omnipresent boss throughout all the *Phantasy Star* games. AM8 had done it. It had delivered a first class RPG that had bowled over reviewers and gamers alike. It had steamrollered formulaic RPGs to create new standards of its own. Players were awarded a space ship for interplanetary travel; the 'boss who's not a boss' was seen here for the very first time; but most importantly AM8 hadn't just created a timeline, it had created a universe: a universe gamers would want to return to over and over again.

Pleased with *Phantasy Star*'s success, Sega commissioned a translation and ten months later *Phantasy Star* was released in North America. Retailing for $10 less than the hardware it was played on, even Sega was surprised to see the speed that the game was selling. The translation wasn't good, name changes made to some key characters changed the sex of the characters (even changing the story) and some gamers treat it as a different game entirely. Still, *Phantasy Star* was considered a great success and as such a sequel was quickly put into production. AM8 stayed together but were strengthened by Toru Yoshida joining AM8 as team manager. Sega had learnt from the past and knew that with a new console almost ready for launch, in the shape of the Mega Drive, it had a great chance to get an RPG established before Nintendo had finalised the specs for its then next generation SNES.

The first thing Toru Yoshida did was to make the decision that the game should be in 2D: "I wanted to lose the sparse 3D dungeons of the first game and create a densely-populated environment to give a sense of scale," he told Mega magazine at the time. The battles would play out in three dimensions though and the character animation had improved immensely



» By *Phantasy Star 3* gamers had an expectation of who was behind the evil of the game.

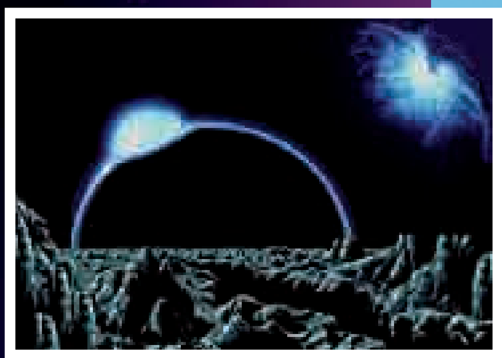
DO YOU REMEMBER WHEN…

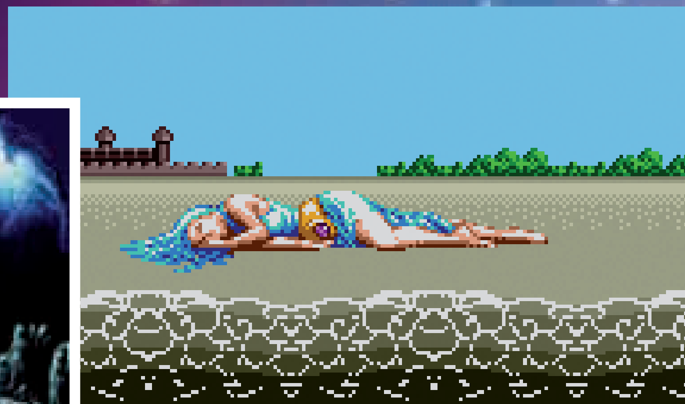


YOU ENTERED THE LOBBY?
Walking into the lobby of Phantasy Star Online for the first time is one of the series' biggest highlights. Despite only being able to use a keyboard to communicate, Sonic Team's ingenious chat system instantly broke down the boundaries for players all around the world.

"BACK THEN THE IDEA OF A FEMALE HERO WAS PRACTICALLY UNHEARD OF, WE WANTED TO DO THINGS THAT HADN'T BEEN DONE BEFORE, SO THE IDEA OF A FEMALE CAME NATURALLY"







» *PS3* was much darker than the first two games, something gamers noticed from the sinister introduction.



» Special thanks to www.shinforce.com who supplied us with many useful images, including this rather splendid boss from Phantasy Star Online.

THE OTHER PHANTASY STARS

Being a Sonic Team franchise has seen *Phantasy Star* locales and characters appear in many other games, usually as hidden extras. Some are interesting curios but some really are something to behold. *Hoshi Wo* on the Sega Master System allowed players to visit Palma, Motavia and Dezoris via a shuttle that must sound familiar to some of you. *Super Daisen Ryaku* on the Mega Drive contained a map of the planet Mota. *Shenmue 1* and *2* featured a Myau Musk Cat toy while the bus Toy had the journey Paseo-Zema on its information board. Rouge's final stage in *Sonic Adventure 2* contains *PSO* pick up boxes containing rings, and the subsequent *Sonic Adventure 2* battle contained *PSO* costumes for Shadow and Sonic, unlockable by attaining all A grades. Even as recently as the GameCube *Beach Spikers*, Sonic Team have been hiding away goodies – just type PHANTA2 as a girls' name to unlock two outfits, some green hair and Numan ears. A Humewearl face also becomes available.

SET ONE 1000 YEARS AFTER THE FIRST GAME, A DESPERATE FUTURE IS PAINTED WHERE TECHNOLOGY AND NATURE STRUGGLE TO CO-EXIST

since the first game. The cutscenes remained as well and demonstrated the power of Sega's new hardware, with Rolph, the main character, having the end of *Phantasy Star* narrated to him through a series of cutscenes.

Phantasy Star II is where the themes of the series really started to emerge. Set 1000 years after the first game, a future is painted where technology and nature struggle to co-exist – a future where ecology is governed by a machine: Mother Brain. Developed to manage the ecology of the Agol system she has started to malfunction. Where Alis had to make do with the companions destined to meet her, Rolph gets to choose his own party to take on his adventure. Then there is, Nei, Rolph's partner through this adventure who would go on to become a firm fan favourite and prove once and for all that videogames can be emotive; Nei's fate would be mirrored in many games after *Phantasy Star II* (*Final Fantasy VII* for instance), but as in life you never forget the first time.

Another reason *Phantasy Star II* stands out in the series is due to its impressive boss battles. "I remember that both Dark Star and Mother Brain were remarkably tough," recalls Yoshida. "I don't quite know what inspired me, but Mother Brain comes from a mother with an unmistakable sense of language. I borrowed elements from computer and mothers, so when I brought her to life I managed to give her a Godlike feel." And they were tough too; techniques became integral to the game, and battles moved to a higher plain as a result, challenging players who were used to a one-dimensional attack tactic. Team play was now a necessity.

Released in March 1989 in Japan, an English translation hit stores in North America in time for Christmas, where the game dominated sales charts for the coming months.

With success now assured for *Phantasy Star*, Sega developed a third instalment almost back-to-back with the second, using the same game engine, but with a vastly different team as many of the original team had moved on to new projects. Step forward Kazunari Tsukamoto, who would join Reiko Kodama and Toru Yoshida in what has become the most talked about *Phantasy Star* of the early years.

Phantasy Star III: Generations Of Doom was created as and proved to be quite a departure for the series. Set a thousand years after the events of *Phantasy Star II*, this time the player would be thrown into the midst of a civil war, with the game being open-ended. The player could take a different role in each generation and this led to different story line branches and one of four different game endings. Having little correlation to the first two *Phantasy Star* games didn't prevent the game from being excellent in its own right though.

"*Phantasy Star: Generations Of Doom* is slightly different from the others," begins Kazunari Tsukamoto. "*Phantasy Star 1, II* and *IV* all have a vertical flow, while *III* has the feeling of being more like a side story." It's a fact not missed by Reiko Kodama. "Most of the planning staff for the game were from *Phantasy Star II*," she continues. "When we were in the planning stages for *Phantasy Star III*, we thought that we wanted to make something that could be played without prior knowledge of the first two adventures, instead of the





» *Phantasy Star 3 CARD Revolution* was a fantastic game, with some of the prettiest in-game visuals seen on the GameCube. Worth looking up just for the offline mode.

IF YOU PLAY ONE PHANTASY STAR GAME… PLAY THIS…



PHANTASY STAR ONLINE - DC

Never mind the many console firsts it broke, *Phantasy Star Online* should be enjoyed because it took the beloved series in an exciting new direction, whilst ensuring fans wouldn't be disappointed with the end result. Those with a 360 or PS2 may want to try *Phantasy Star Universe*, as it's the same game but on a far grander scale.



» *PSO* took materials from the original *Phantasy Star* and brought them right up to date, as the evolution of the dragon shows.

game being a direct continuation. I think it is an interesting game in its own right. The reason why the story was so radically different is that the development team wanted to create a unique *Phantasy Star*, something they achieved and I'm very happy with the outcome"

After the run away successes of the first three games, Sega and gamers alike were hungry for more *Phantasy Star*, and a couple of minor releases on the Game Gear did little to sate the thirst for a return to Algo. The first *Phantasy Star Adventure* was an adaptation of the Sega Game library download title *Phantasy Star II: Text Adventure*. This game sought to provide a background history for the characters of *Phantasy Star II* and was greatly enhanced by the use of graphics. The second, *Phantasy Star Gaiden*, is set between *Phantasy Star 1* and *II*, where the player learns that Alis has gone off to set up her own colony. Although solid to play the game was aimed at a younger audience and the anime graphics didn't convey the feel of *Phantasy Star* like other games. By now, 1993, Sega was a vast tidal wave that swept over everything before it. Its arcade machines dominated, it was out-performing Nintendo in homes outside of Japan, and the team that Isao Otiawo had put together to make an RPG had served up a blue hedgehog that had become one of the most recognisable characters in the world. Sega's R&D departments however were finding it difficult to progress the Genesis hardware and within four years developers had almost maxed the capabilities of the machine. And so it was that Sega released the Sega CD, a CD add-on for the Genesis that incorporated hardware upgrades that would allow sprite scaling and 3D effects akin to Mode 7: Nintendo's standard at that time.

Development of *Phantasy Star IV* began in early 1993. Pictures of a 3D game world started to surface in the Sega press at the time and rumours persisted that *Phantasy Star IV* was Mega CD-bound, to give the new hardware a much-needed killer app. Debates raged through letters pages in magazines as to whether the game should be released on a new format, with existing users worried they would lose the opportunity to play what was already being heralded as the end of the story. At the eleventh hour the format was changed and it was decided that *Phantasy Star IV* would indeed be a cartridge game for the Genesis. The 3D dungeons were removed and the game took a similar form to the previous games, albeit enhanced beyond the expectations of the hardware it would appear on.

"We really wanted to use those 3D dungeons in the game," regrets Kodama. "The ideas we had proved to be a little too much for the hardware to handle and, unfortunately, we just couldn't convey the sort of setting we really wanted."

Released in December 1993, the *Phantasy Star* team threw everything that they had at the game, resulting in a title that would tie up the unfinished threads of the earlier games, while introducing 16-bit gamers to anime storyboards and animation and a much more refined graphics set. The battle configurations had also changed and it was now possible to chain techniques together to create combinations, making boss battles much more palatable. Alternatively you could fight while riding vehicles in the "Machine Battle". It was interesting how the team that created *Phantasy Star* all wanted to contribute to the final episode. Kodama, who by this time could pick and chose projects, said "I worked on this title because I really wanted to illustrate spiritual exchanges, friendship and love among different races" while Toru Yoshida tells us that, "with *Phantasy Star IV* our biggest goal was to finish the game neatly. This was the one where I worked as a director and as such I dedicated all my energies to it" finally, Akinori Nishiyama adds "I focussed a great deal of creative energy on painting the lives of the people inhabiting Motavia and am very pleased with the results". It seems everyone involved wanted to ensure that the universe was summed up properly.

For six years *Phantasy Star* had enchanted its players and drew unbridled passion from its design teams and then nothing. It all stopped. *Phantasy Star* had reached a hiatus that would last for six years. With hindsight this made perfect sense, as *Phantasy Star* had achieved all that *FFVII* did, except a generation earlier; the rumoured Saturn Betas would only have delivered more of the same and after six games *Phantasy Star* needed technology to catch up so that it could progress again.

On 19 September 1999 Sega made the headlines at the Tokyo Game Show by announcing that a new *Phantasy Star* game would be released for the fledgling Dreamcast system and would make full use of the console's online technology. Sonic Team would take responsibility for the development of what would go on to be one of Sega's biggest games of the last ten years and for many would provide an entry level to the *Phantasy Star* universe.

Development was beset with problems: the Japanese beta was running late and was proving unstable. This was to be the first online console RPG and as such Sega was breaking new ground and had no history or best practices in place – every milestone had to be learnt along the way. As the launch

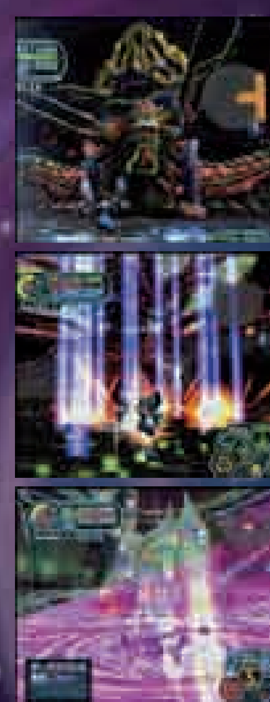


» *Phantasy Star II: Text Adventure* kept the feel of the first games, but had no animation.



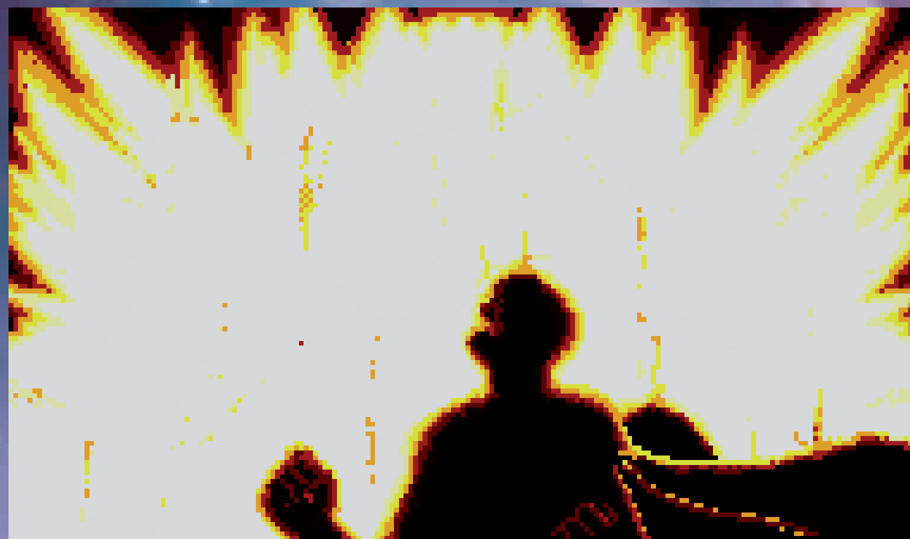


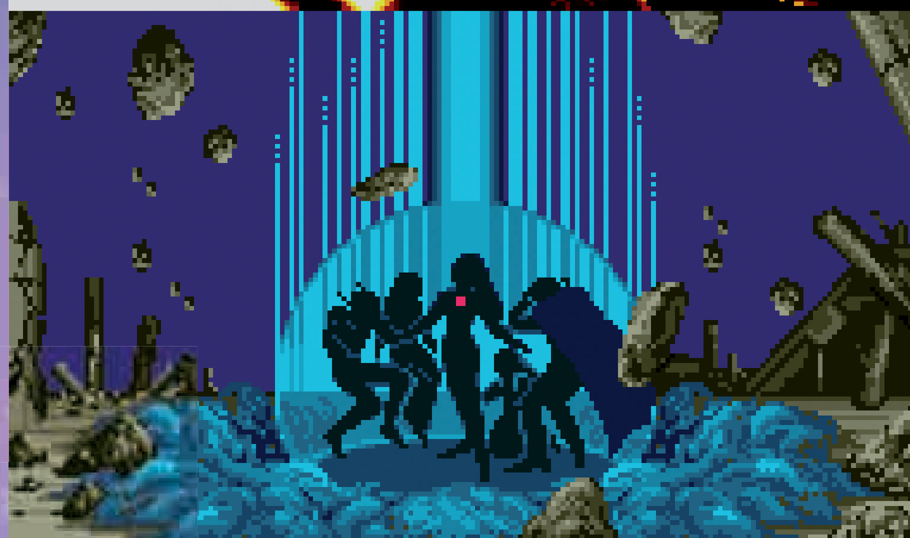
» *Phantasy Star 4* told the story through animated story boards that added a vibrant feel to *Phantasy Star*.



» Dark Falz has an astonishing array of attacks, and unlike other bosses doesn't follow a set routine.

» **Right:** The Anime displays of *Phantasy Star 4* were superb, and depicted the game in a way not seen by western gamers at that point.





STILL IN THE DARK

Dark Falz or Dark Force is the only recurring character that has made an appearance in every game. Seemingly destroyed on countless occasions he just keeps coming back. As far as videogame bosses go he has killed more lead characters than any other. He panders to the weakness and vanities of the worlds that he dominates and watches as citizens evoke their own downfall. *Phantasy Star 2* talks of people getting complacent and lazy after the events of *PS1*, living as they have in a Eutopia for 1000 years. Dark Falz has evolved down the years and tackling Dark Falz at the end of *PSO* on Ultimate setting is one of gaming's toughest challenges; his Megid attack alone can reduce a whole party's health to one HP, leaving them all but dead – once you leave a boss battle to resurrect, you can't rejoin until the boss is vanquished. For maximum frustration try tackling Dark Falz with a retro editor, who accidentally sells the epic weapon you leant him when he was meant to be buying trimate, doh!

approached Sega hit upon the idea of giving away *ChuChu Rocket!* – an addictive puzzle game – to Dream Arena users. The idea was that if you gave a game away en-masse, you would negate the relatively low (at the time) online user numbers by encouraging use of one game.

Naka agreed and told Sega World back in 1999, "in this case it was the network. We learned a lot of lessons from *ChuChu Rocket!*, but for *PSO* we had to learn a lot about the differences of networking in different countries, since this is a global RPG. I realized in a sense how great Microsoft is, because as long as you have Windows, you can connect to the network and play online games anywhere. So with *Diablo* and *Ultima Online*, Windows takes care of most of the networking stuff, whereas in making *PSO* we had to start with the game, and then one level below that – the network." He then went on to add some light to the biggest struggle facing *PSO* at the time: "A PC costs maybe ten times as much as a Dreamcast, and people generally look at the many PC games that are online and think it must be easy, since there's a whole bunch of them. But people probably don't realize how much more difficult it is to make network games for a machine that costs one-tenth of a PC. I think that in the end, we were able to create something that was even better."

As the deadline approached, last minute changes were made and some features were dropped or reduced in size. *Phantasy Star Online* launched in Japan on 21 December 2000 and the response was overwhelming.

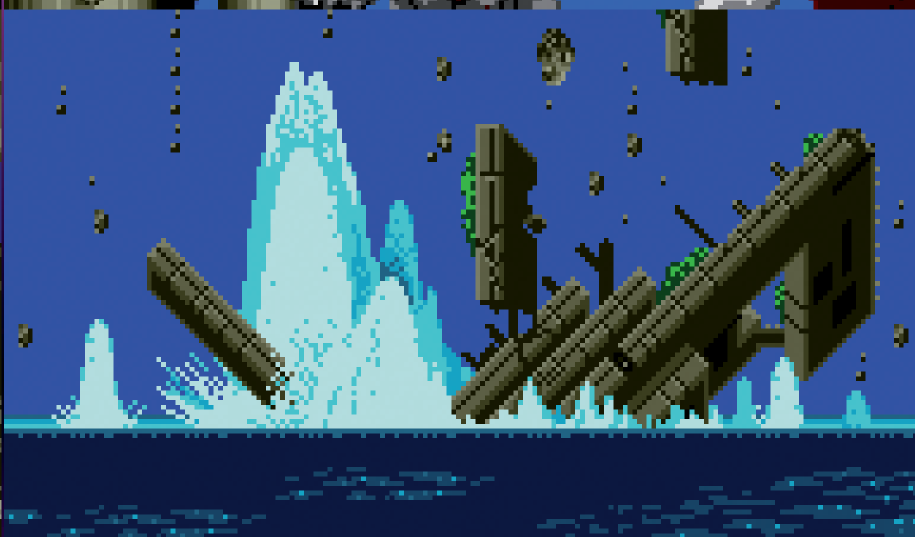
Players were awestruck by the vibrant world that Yuji Naka and his team had created and few ever noticed that the sounds of *Phantasy Star Online* were largely a reworking of the original score; *PSO* had absorbed all that had been *Phantasy Star* before and restructured it into a world draped in beauty and shrouded in foreboding. The timeless tale of machines and nature failing to coexist was to return and there is much evidence to suggest that *Phantasy Star Online* was borne from a backstory of *Phantasy Star II*. The story unfolds against a backdrop of helpless optimism on the planet Ragol and Pioneer 2: a ship carrying a race of settlers looking for a new home after their home world was destroyed. The Hunters Guild (which first appeared in *Phantasy Star IV*) offers quests onto the planet surface that drive the narration. Each quest acts like a burlesque dancer slowly and tantalisingly unwrapping layer upon layer until all you see is Ragol without the veneer. And then *PSO* unfolds into a warped fantasy, a future-world Hotel California you can check out any time you like. But this is a world you can never leave; the harder you look the less hospitable Ragol becomes, until it dawns on you that the reason there are no



» The instantly recognisable Mother Brain from *Phantasy Star 2*. She evoked the powers of planets in an attempt to thwart your attempts at shutting her down.









survivors from pioneer 1 is that the world is consumed by an evil that is feeding off anything that has the misfortune to be alive on Ragol. No one can be trusted and as your character develops and grows you can't help but feel an affinity with Red Ring Rico, who, although missing, has littered the planet with useful information for the gamer to discover. Despite never meeting her, the fate that befell her would melt even the most savage beast.

Online the game allows four players to meet up in a lobby. Online quests are available, but soon give way to character levelling and rare item exploration. *PSO* included another innovative online feature in the way that chat could be carried across the world, a user interface that transcended language by enabling icon chat. Now for the first time European players could play and communicate all around the world. Sega also gave *PSO* its own time zone; linking up with Swatch, *PSO* operated on a beat time system, that meant in-game everyone played on the same time frame. This was useful for the special event quests that were periodically launched to tie in with holidays like Christmas and Easter. Such was the success of *Phantasy Star* that Sega published these figures showing online statistics just four months after the Japanese release: Japan (release 12/21/2000): 130,000 players; America (release 1/31/2001): 70,000; Europe (release 2/16/2001): 35,000. Remember that in 2001 most Dreamcast connections were dial up, Japanese gamers had to pay for a hunters licence and less than five per cent of European users had broadband and as such had to pay per minute to play. 26000 simultaneous players was the record at that point – some six months later this number would double.

Midway through 2001 Sega released *PSO Version 2,* which was a slight update offering interactive lobbies, a higher-level cap and far tougher bosses. In 2002 and 2003 respectively the Nintendo GameCube and Microsoft Xbox would receive their own versions in the form of *Phantasy Star Online Episode 1* and *2.* The first was a bug-fixed update of *PSO,* while *Episode 2* was a reworked version of *2* that featured new levels, weapons and bosses.

2004 saw Sega release *Episode 3: C.A.R.D Revolution* as a GameCube exclusive. Staying firmly with Pioneer 2 this title aimed to conclude the story that *PSO* started. Using a totally different play mechanic to the previous *Phantasy Stars* it had more in common with the earlier *Phantasy Star* games than *PSO,* but played out through a series of card battles. The character classes remained the same as *PSO,* as did the enemies and the game proved once again that innovation is never far from the franchise's creators.

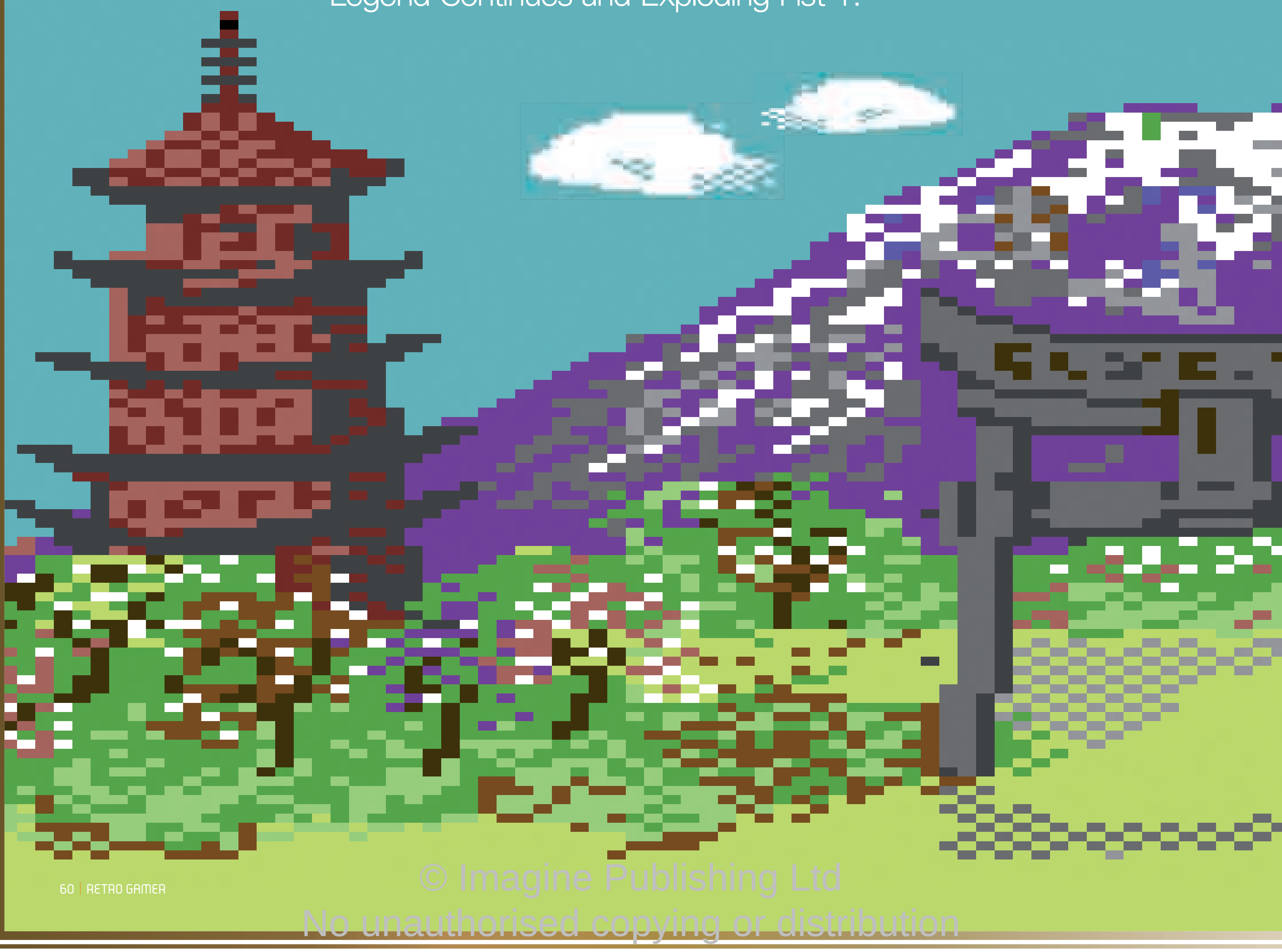
So as *Phantasy Star* looks towards its impending 20th birthday and the recent release of *Phantasy Star Universe,* what more can we expect from the evergreen series? According to, Takao Miyoshi, *Phantasy Star Universe*'s producer the best of the old and the new. "In terms of balance between offline and online, I put the same weight on both elements. I feel that it would be nice to play the story-based offline mode first and then go online. That would be the way to play it, and I feel it is more fun to play that way. I think there is currently a very good balance between offline and online play in *PSU.*" Time will tell, of course, but no one has ever been disappointed when expecting great things from Phantasy Star, have they Sonic Team?

PSO INCLUDED ANOTHER INNOVATIVE ONLINE FEATURE IN THE WAY THAT CHAT COULD BE CARRIED ACROSS THE WORLD, A USER INTERFACE THAT TRANSCENDED LANGUAGE BY ENABLING ICON CHAT

THE MAKING OF...

THE WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

Hiiyyaaaaah! Craig Grannell travels to the Far East (and then heads south) to talk to Gregg Barnett, the man behind Australia-based Beam Software's benchmark one-on-one fighting game The Way Of The Exploding Fist and its two lesser-known sequels, Fist II: The Legend Continues and Exploding Fist +.









In the Eighties, programmers were desperate to do something original. "In those days, that could mean starting a whole new genre," explains Gregg Barnett, the man responsible for benchmark beat-'em-up *The Way Of The Exploding Fist*.

Gregg joined Australia-based Melbourne House's development studio Beam Software straight from university. Fascinated by the games industry, he started out by converting a trio of ZX Spectrum hits – *Hungry Horace*, *Horace Goes Skiing* and *The Hobbit* – to the C64, before turning his mind to his first original creation. "I'd been formulating ideas for a fighting game while working on the Spectrum ports, as I was very much into designing sports simulations," he says. "As it turns out, *Karate Champ* then came out in the arcades, demonstrating what I was talking about." Gregg's game was green-lit by Alfred Milgrom, Melbourne House's then managing director and co-owner, and things went from there.

The timing of *Karate Champ*'s release was both a boon and a burden for Gregg. On the positive side, it became common sense to get *Fist* into production as rapidly as possible, because other companies would soon jump on the bandwagon, and, as Gregg says, "the thought of being first with a particular style of game on home computers was big at Beam in those days. Back then, publishers were eager for originality and players jumped on board just as enthusiastically." On the other hand, Beam's creation would forever be compared to Data East's arcade game. To some extent, such comparisons are justified: both games feature one-on-one karate bouts, with white and red-clad players battling it out. However, the resemblance is superficial, and though Gregg admits the boundaries between the games blurred a little as his game progressed – "the charging bull in the bonus round was a case of *Karate Champ*'s influence going too far" – he points out that there are important distinctions between the two games. "*Fist*'s combat style and moves – other than the somersault, which was borrowed – aren't those of *Karate Champ*, but rather of Jeet Kune Do, the fighting technique of Bruce Lee," explains Gregg. "Many missed this, or just thought we were being different to avoid ripping off *Karate Champ*." A good example, according to Gregg, is *Fist*'s front kick: a correct side-style kick as opposed to *Karate Champ*'s football-style effort.

This level of realism was of paramount importance to Gregg. With most mid-Eighties fighting games – including *Karate Champ* – being somewhat cartoony affairs, and many diluting the fighting by integrating another genre, Gregg claims "there was never any thought of *Fist* being anything other than a hardcore sim."



» "Take that!" yelled the white fighter, bemoaning the CPC version's sluggish gameplay, whilst admiring the backdrop.

MAKING MOVES

Although *Karate Champ* introduced gamers to a fairly complex control system, most home computer users rarely set foot in arcades and were therefore used to simpler controls. But *Fist*, despite its roster of moves and simulation qualities, still required immediacy if the game was to succeed – something Gregg was all too aware of: "One of the first things I remember about creating *Fist* is walking around for days with a joystick in my hand – all that interested me at the time was creating moves that could be mapped on to the joystick in an intuitive way." The idea was to ensure the player rarely had to bother with instructions, and, in Gregg's words, "could pick the

IN THE KNOW



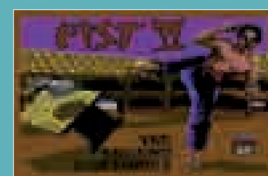
» **PUBLISHER:** MELBOURNE HOUSE/ FIREBIRD (*EXPLODING FIST +*)

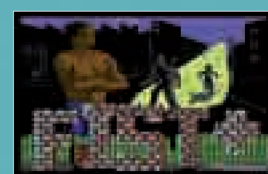
» **DEVELOPER:** BEAM SOFTWARE

» **RELEASED:** 1985-8

» **GENRE:** BEAT-'EM-UP/ ARCADE ADVENTURE (*FIST II*)

» **EXPECT TO PAY:** £2+







THE MAKING OF...

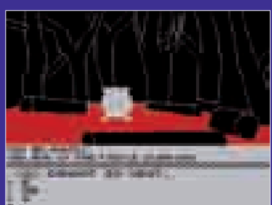
THE WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

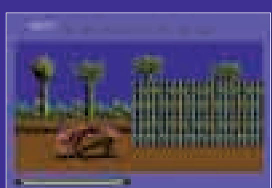
DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

THE HOBBIT
SYSTEMS: C64, ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC, APPLE II/+
YEAR: 1982-5

SAMURAI WARRIOR: THE BATTLES OF USAGI YOJIMBO
C64, ZX SPECTRUM, AMSTRAD CPC
YEAR: 1988

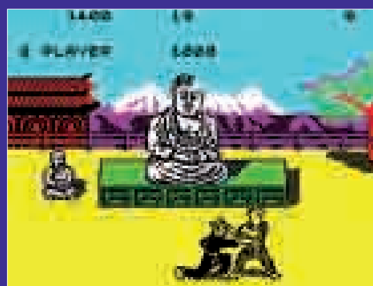
TRANSFORMERS: ARMADA
SYSTEMS: PS2
YEAR: 2004





» Ah, blue skies, still air and lush greenery. Oh, and two guys kicking seven shades out of each other – this is a *Fist* game, after all.

"THE THOUGHT OF BEING FIRST WITH A PARTICULAR STYLE OF GAME ON HOME COMPUTERS WAS BIG AT BEAM IN THOSE DAYS. BACK THEN, PUBLISHERS WERE EAGER FOR ORIGINALITY AND PLAYERS JUMPED ON BOARD JUST AS ENTHUSIASTICALLY"
GREGG BARNETT



» The Speccy conversion of *Fist* weakens the leg sweep (hooray!), although the AI is remarkably standoffish (boo!).

joystick up and beat the crap out of somebody else". It became obvious to Gregg that kicks had to be made distinct from other moves – something achieved via the use of the fire-button. The main vertical and horizontal directions had broad and long-reaching moves assigned to them, which were easy for players to access. Diagonals housed trickier moves that when used well were the difference between a good player and a great player. And importantly, from both a gameplay and realism perspective, *Fist* wasn't just about attacking – defensive blocks and counter moves were integrated, taking the game to a new level. "As far as I was concerned, mine was the first game to use a block/counter move dynamic," says Gregg. "And it's been a long wait for this to make a return to the genre, although I notice it's become quite the in-thing at the moment. Frankly, I have no idea why it disappeared, only to be replaced by multiple button-pressing contortions!"

With *Fist*'s moves mapped, Gregg beavered away on the game, and soon had a two-player version. When it became clear that the team had created something special, Gregg turned his attention to *Fist*'s one-player mode. "We ignored developing the AI until the two-player game was working; I then watched people play the game and came up with ten attributes that could define a player. I coded the hardest AI player based on the maximum of those attributes and deteriorated the attributes for lesser AI players." As with all fighting games, not everything went to plan, and the C64 version of the game became infamous for the player's ability to best opponents using the leg-sweep alone. "It was a problem, and I regret not fudging what was otherwise a perfect system," admits Gregg. "It was a case of leaving it as a long-range move that worked visually rather than restricting its hit range, which didn't look so good." In testing, Gregg notes no one was obsessed with using the leg-sweep. "In those days, most people tended to play for fun – the use of cheats and the mentality that came with it was not envisioned back then. It really was a different time!"

A PERFECT HIT

Despite the leg-sweep 'bug', Gregg's AI work was a success, and 'honest' players were challenged by the tougher computer opponents – something enhanced by the







» The cave-dwelling assailant was so embarrassed about his brown trousers that he had to wear a mask.

nature of the game's collision detection. "It was pixel-perfect – rare in the genre since," claims Gregg. "I designed an editor that let me position the final frame of each attack move against every other possible frame the opponent could be in. There's a couple of pixels allowance for full-point hits and somewhat more for half-point ones, with accompanying full- and half-point audio impact grunts and biffs! This is why the hits feel so substantial – in *Fist*, a successful blow to an opponent's nose really means he was hit right on the nose!" And as those who've played *Fist* will know, in some versions the player may also get trampled by a rampaging bull. "This was only in the early production runs, and was a pretty direct steal from *Karate Champ*. The thing is, though, it really worked well in *Fist* – it was less effective in *Karate Champ*. I really liked the shock value!"

Although *Fist* arguably offered a number of home-computer firsts when it came to gameplay, Gregg reminds us that the level of realism and simulation-like feel had plenty to do with the huge work that went into the game's graphics. At the time, the number of animation frames for the main characters astounded reviewers, and although the game's graphics were bettered in subsequent years, *Fist*'s visual appearance remains an astonishing achievement for a game released in 1985. "Other than somersaults, the moves were directly based on those of Bruce Lee," says Gregg. "I had a few books with simple drawings of all the moves, and Greg Holland, the artist, took things from there." Despite Holland not being an animator, he was able to take key drawings and develop them into flowing moves. "My main request was to keep moves broad and fast at the start and put in more work at the impact point," explains Gregg. "This was also dictated by the very name of the game – 'Way Of The Exploding Fist' a literal translation of Bruce Lee's Jeet Kune Do. The hand and foot had to be slightly loose through the move and then tense up at the final frame, giving the game that solid hit."



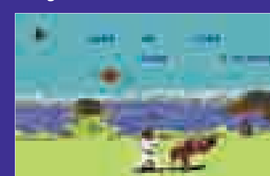
» Our hero didn't realise his snoring would give away the fact that he wasn't actually meditating.

Greg Holland's background graphics added to the atmosphere, providing a quartet of beautifully rendered backdrops. "Greg was really a background artist, and I think that's where he had the most fun," says Gregg. "Of course, in those days even wallpaper backdrops were intrinsically part of the gaming experience, and despite there only being a few, they were always considered a reward for players as they progressed. It's no exaggeration to say that a good new backdrop back then was like finding a new level in a game today." The atmosphere was enhanced by the game's audio, especially on the C64, which offered Neil Brennan's suitably oriental tunes, and plenty of meaty sound effects. "The screams and impact effects were paramount to the game's success, taking things to another dimension for most players. The satisfaction in landing a perfect blow to an opponent's forehead is the purest expression of what the game's about." And what of the loading-screen scream that scared the wits out of a generation of C64 owners? "That was designed to come in early and announce the game in a way that meant nobody would walk away," claims Gregg.

Fist's combination of great controls, gameplay, graphics and sound ensured

FIRST BLOOD

"I have a very clear memory of the moment we all knew we had something special," remembers Gregg when quizzed about the early stages of *Fist*'s development. "It was when I did my first full compile of code." In those days, Gregg tended to spend plenty of time designing and pseudo-coding, and then writing and testing routines before linking everything together. "That could get stressful for management, in that they couldn't see clear progress as nothing was happening on-screen," says Gregg. "About three months into this process, it was finally time to link everything together. In one compile, the game went from nothing to a pretty good two-player game. I was quite pleased that it actually worked and went to get a coffee. When I got back to my desk there was a queue of people waiting to play the game!"





THE MAKING OF…

THE WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST



ATTACK OF THE CLONES

Advertised before *Fist*, System 3's *International Karate* came out almost a year after Melbourne House's game, with many similarities. Were *Fist*'s creators annoyed by this new pretender to the throne? "*Karate Champ* was an open invitation for anybody to put a fighting game on home computers, and with *IK* being advertised way before *Fist*, we thought we'd be beaten to the punch," recalls Gregg. "But *Fist* came out, and System 3 kept on advertising. When *IK* finally arrived, it was clear *Fist* had been cloned – from all accounts: they changed team and direction once *Fist* appeared." Gregg notes that System 3's creation is often akin to *Fist* with extra polish, and that it uses a similar graphical style of fighting to *Fist* as opposed to that of *Karate Champ*. "It also coincidentally used – how shall I say this? – 'similar' code in places," grumbles Gregg. "That aside, it was a good game and I liked the extra smoothness in some of the animation. As for being flattered or annoyed, I was more bemused than anything else."



the game critical acclaim. "Everyone was over the moon," recalls Gregg. "The critical response and the sales were everything we could have hoped for. Of course, that was dampened by not being on a royalty deal!" Gregg notes that knowledge of the game made it beyond the games press, showing its significance for the industry: "I remember a Sunday Times article about the use of the name 'Way of the Exploding Fist'. It suggested that this choice of name was a sign that the games industry had grown up!"

THE LEGEND CONTINUES

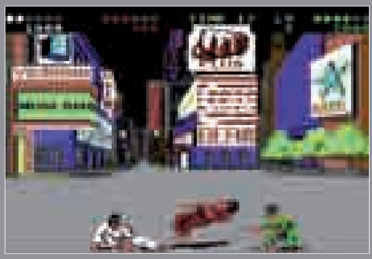
When *Fist II: The Legend Continues* arrived, towards the end of the next year, it was clear the game had changed. Although one-on-one fights occurred, exploration was at the core of *Fist II*. "I wanted to do an 'action adventure' – exploration and atmosphere were to be big, and fights were to be energy-bar-driven brawls instead of points-based contests," explains Gregg. Thus, the game centred around a descendant of those who appeared in *Fist*, fighting to free his kind from a warlord who'd betrayed and defeated the grand masters, leaving the land in ruins.

The game evolved into a large arcade adventure. The disciple must search the lands near the warlord's volcano stronghold, seeking out scrolls, meditating in temples, fighting guards, and tackling the perilous terrain, which includes waterfalls, cliffs, and underground catacombs. "I was trying to create an atmosphere to get lost in," says Gregg, noting that Neil Brennan's music was the one component that reached that lofty goal. "In hindsight, the distances between scrolls were too great, but this was down to planned things being missed out more than anything. In the end, it sunk back to basic fighting, with only the odd puzzle idea surviving, such as kicking down trees," says Gregg. The fighting was also different from *Fist* – using a system that's now commonplace, *Fist II* replaced the original game's points system with an energy bar for each fighter – if yours disappeared it was game over, and if an enemy's bar was reduced to zero, he'd fall to the ground and melt away. Oddly, though, that was the only falling fighters did in *Fist II* – even a flying kick to the face didn't knock your foe over. "This was down to memory limitations – we had the animations, but couldn't squeeze them in. Also, that would have introduced whole new contexts, such as wailing into somebody on the ground – and although we could have made fighters invincible when on the ground, the player would have been constantly waiting for them to get up!"

The sequel met with mixed reactions. Commodore User and Your Sinclair dished out heaps of praise, but Newsfield's mags were less impressed: while Crash's review expressed disappointment, suggesting *Fist II* didn't live up to the hype, Zzap!64 slated the game, with Gary Penn's half-page comment pulling every facet of the game apart and Julian Rignall dismissing it as "completely awful". Most criticism was levelled at the sprawling exploration, with several reviewers noting that boredom soon crept in. "I'm sure all reactions were fair at the time," says Gregg, admitting that the game fell short of his vision. "The reviews tended to fall into two camps: hardcore and casual gamer – something that became more defined as the industry matured." Gregg reckons that it was the hardcore reviewers – such as those at Zzap!64 – that weren't impressed, but the less hardcore gamers enjoyed the



» Being flung headlong over waterfalls and down huge chasms is all in a day's work for *Fist II*'s hero.



» The green fighter misunderstood the rules, trying to catch the unconscious red fighter flying towards him.



"THE COLLISION DETECTION WAS PIXEL-PERFECT, SOMETHING RARELY SEEN IN THE GENRE SINCE. THIS IS WHY THE HITS FEEL SO SUBSTANTIAL. IN FIST, A SUCCESSFUL BLOW TO AN OPPONENT'S NOSE REALLY MEANS HE WAS HIT RIGHT ON THE NOSE!"

GREGG BARNETT

atmosphere and wandering around between fights. "But, in those days, the hardcore gamers ruled the roost."

FINAL FIGHT

Despite the reaction to *Fist II*, the series got a final outing. In 1988, the Firebird-released *Exploding Fist +* saw the series return to its roots, offering single-screen-based fighting action, but adding a third fighter and a points system that was perhaps a little too reminiscent of System 3's *International Karate +*, which had been released the previous year. "The game was certainly a reaction to *IK+*, although it wasn't an attempt to 'get back at *International Karate*'," remembers Gregg. "Marketing people just considered it a good opportunity – the success of *IK+* gave the impression that two similar games could exist in the marketplace."

Unlike *IK+* and the original *Fist*, the location of *Exploding Fist +* was moved to the city. "This was to provide something different," recalls Gregg, noting that the company was also hoping to attract advertising for the in-game billboards, but during those early days of the industry, they instead almost ended up with a lawsuit from Coca-Cola! Elsewhere, despite some new moves – "the back elbow was dropped early on from the original *Fist*", notes Gregg – the game had little to offer, with a bland soundtrack and choppy graphics, although its frenetic gameplay ensured it found some fans. "Frankly, it was never more than a marketing opportunity," admits Gregg. "I programmed it during lunch hours over a period of a couple of months. At that point in time, I wasn't even programming – I was designing and directing multiple games."



» Only the power of the brown hand can stop ninjas invading the city in *Exploding Fist +*.

Unsurprisingly, it's the original *Fist* that takes its place in Gregg's heart: "The game does seem to stand up well in most eyes. As for me, I'm very proud of it and wouldn't change anything significant. More importantly, it's a wonderful memory from the 'golden age' of games!" But is there any possibility that the series might re-emerge for the current generation of gamers to enjoy? "It wouldn't surprise me if the name 'Way Of The Exploding Fist' still has marketing clout – perhaps not as a simple fighting game but as a modern day equivalent," muses Gregg. "Having said that, we are finally seeing fighting games with intuitive moves and block/counter systems. It's frankly been a long time between drinks for those of us who don't really like frantic button-pushing combos!"



IT NEVER ENDS

Although *Fist II* offered an ending of sorts (offing the warlord switches the viewpoint to a shot of the erupting volcano), *Exploding Fist* potentially goes on forever. The only 'reward' for the player is achieving the coveted 10th Dan. "It wasn't envisioned to end the game as such," explains Gregg. "We wanted something that acknowledged the player's success, but let them continue with better opponents." In the end, Beam ran out of time to create a de-facto ending anyway, and shipped the game. Despite this, some players thought there must be something more to the game and continued to play on. In April, 2006 (on the first, naturally), C64 Endings (www.c64endings.co.uk) announced that an ending did exist, with the player fighting the grand master upon reaching 50th Dan. Of course, it was an April Fools' Day hoax, but Gregg notes that the fake ending "would actually have done the job to a fair extent!"



UNQUESTIONABLY THE BEST OF THE CLASSIC CASTLEVANIA GAMES

AKUMAJO DRACULA X: CHI NO RONDO

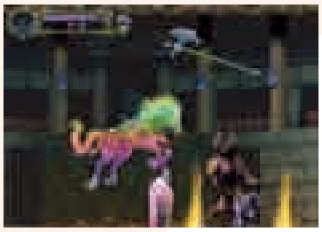
One of the few Castlevanias that never made it the West and also one of the best.

IN THE KNOW



- » **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** TURBO DUO
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £95+
- » **CAN'T IMPORT? THEN WHY NOT TRY:** *CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT*

SotN was the first game to radically alter the formula, making the series more like *Super Metroid.* It also features nearly all the enemies from *Dracula X*, the storyline directly carries on (it actually starts with the final boss fight from *Dracula X*), and it gives the ability to play as Richter. So while gameplay isn't strictly the same, *SotN* is the next best thing. It's actually better in some ways, so why not get both?





Interesting fact
There was a half-arsed attempt to port *Dracula X* to the SNES (sort of), released in Europe as *Vampire's Kiss.* Unfortunately it's regarded as one of the worst *Castlevania* games, and despite some superficial similarities is nothing like the Turbo Duo *Dracula X.*

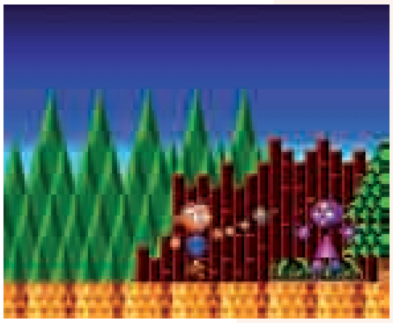


» Unleashing a storm of holy water against an evil demon – one of so many amazing set-piece battles.

メガ駆動機構

Very few *Castlevania* titles remained exclusive to Japan. There was the Sharp X86000 game (which made it to the UK anyway, via the PSone port), some strange Famicom spin-offs (*Kid Dracula,* though the GB version came over here), the Saturn version of *Symphony Of The Night,* and then there was *Akumajo Dracula X: Chi No Rondo* (hereafter called *Rondo*) in 1993. The vast majority of the series was, thankfully, brought to the West. So it's ironic that the greatest of them all, at least regarding the classic series before *Symphony Of The Night*, was the one that never made it. Quite why it stayed in Japan has never been fully explained, though it's likely because the American Turbo Duo (which never made it to the UK) was dying out. The disappointment of fans is readily apparent – you only need to look at the import prices, which hover at around £80 on a slow day at eBay and rocket to over £100 from dealers or if collectors get into a bidding frenzy. People are determined to import and play it, which is understandable since it's both excellent and exclusive.

Everything about *Rondo* is exquisite, with a level of refinement which shows how much logical thinking went into the game. Being



» The seldom seen Stage X, a nice, albeit superfluous, addition to *Dracula X.*

N PROMISE



» This woman in red kisses Richter and steals hearts, while a naked succubus rides a flying skull. Kinky stuff.



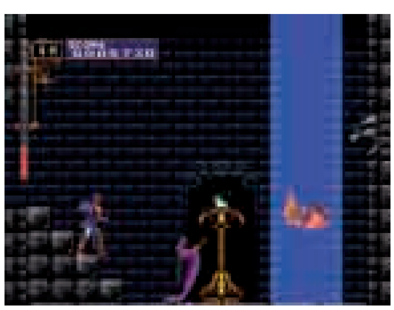
» Animé cinemas, lots of animé cinemas. Why haven't other *Castlevania* games featured such animé cutscenes?

the first in the series to be on CD, Konami included animé cinemas and full voice acting – *Rondo* would become the only game in the series to have this, since while later titles (like *SotN*) had voice acting they never had the same regular mid-game cinemas.

Overall presentation was faultless. With the game being set in Eastern Europe Konami made the ingenious decision to have the intro narrated in German (with Japanese subtitles), giving proceedings a gothic atmosphere. The menu screens contain operatic music and classical nude statues. Even trying to play the game without the needed System Card yields rewards. Normally a PC-Engine CD-ROM game will simply display a splash screen asking for the correct card to be used, but Konami went that extra mile and provided a short mini-level called "Stage X" to play through – featuring cute characters. It's short and offers nothing beyond a curious talking point, but the mere existence of such superfluous additions makes the game a joy to behold. More companies need to show this level of craftsmanship with their games.

Despite the limitations of the ageing NEC hardware, especially compared to the SNES, the visuals in *Rondo* were bright and striking – better than those in *Super Castlevania IV* which was on superior hardware. The key thing to notice is not only the change of artistic style, but also the fantastic art direction. The power of a console is unimportant if there isn't the artistic skill to make use of it; Konami managed to do more with *Rondo*'s limitations than other companies manage with thrice the power. Colours are balanced and stand out, giving personality to the painstakingly well-animated creatures. The designs of the enemies are also worth noting, being of such high quality they were later re-used to become synonymous with the series.

Then there's the music. Has Konami ever done a bad Castlevania soundtrack? Unlikely, but unquestionably it has seldom created music better than that in *Rondo*. A fusion of classical symphonies and electric guitar, remixes of past classic tunes, and thanks to the CD-medium it's all of the highest quality red book audio – a far more intense experience than the more orchestral (though excellent) medleys of *SotN*. It's honestly worth loading the game just to listen to the music.



» With a little effort you can stumble across this chamber where Maria is about to be sacrificed.

The gameplay meanwhile offered a refinement of past titles, becoming the pinnacle of the series. It introduced the ability to backflip by pressing jump twice, and also allowed you to re-acquire recently dropped items. This was a brilliant move, since even if you accidentally collected something it didn't mean the loss of vital weaponry. The biggest addition though was being allowed to jump off and directly onto staircases – the previous rules of stair navigation proved so frustrating, Konami's *Snatcher* included a sly joke stating older games caused the teenage suicide rate of Japan to increase. *Rondo* also brought back several features missing from post-*Castlevania 3* titles. While it wasn't the first game in the series to include different playable characters or branching pathways, it brought back these additions with style. Rescuing Maria made her a playable character, complete with a new set of power-ups, homing doves as weapons, and an incredibly useful double-jump. The need to search every area, to discover hidden passages leading to secret levels, also added a great sense of achievement and exploration. Stumbling across a new screen-filling boss was a thrilling experience, and after a few levels there was no doubt about the perfection of *Akumajo Dracula X: Chi No Rondo*.

While the above may seem like waffle and emotional gushing, we only do it to nullify our disappointment at *Rondo* having never reached the wide audience it deserves. Konami sadly only ported the X68000 game, released as *Castlevania Chronicles*, when in fact they should have brought us *Rondo*. While countless trash polluted British store shelves, we were missing classics like this. It has a high price, but one that is easily justified.

私を読み、私に書くことができ、私に知らせれば好みのゲームはある



The Definitive

Galaxian

CONTROL FIRE

STUART CAMPBELL RETURNS, TRIUMPHANTLY, FROM EXPLORING ALIEN WORLDS TO REVEAL THE TRUTH BEHIND GALAXIAN

By a strange coincidence, Stuart Campbell's mission is also "DESTROY ALIENS", so who better to guide you through the family tree of one of the most famous games of all time?

Generally held to be the first videogame to use a proper colour display (as opposed to sticking strips of red and blue cellophane across a monochrome display or projecting black-and-white images onto a painted backdrop), *Galaxian* crushed all arcade opposition in 1979 like a Panzer division storming a poorly constructed sandcastle. The spellbinding rainbow graphics, twinkling starscape and evocative sound weren't the only tricks it had up its sleeve, though – its swooping, diving aliens added an exciting new dimension to the sedate *Space Invaders* clones that had ruled the era with their cautious sideways march and gradual inching down the screen. The creepily insectoid enemies were menacing and daring, the unearthly sound effects loud and intimidating, and with no defence bunkers to cower behind when things got tricky, the game was intense and remorseless in a way that no coin-op had been before.

Oddly, despite this iconic status, only two games have ever actually borne the name "Galaxian", and most people have never even heard of most of the titles that make up the long and distinguished history of the series. It's lucky then that The Definitive is here to take care of you.



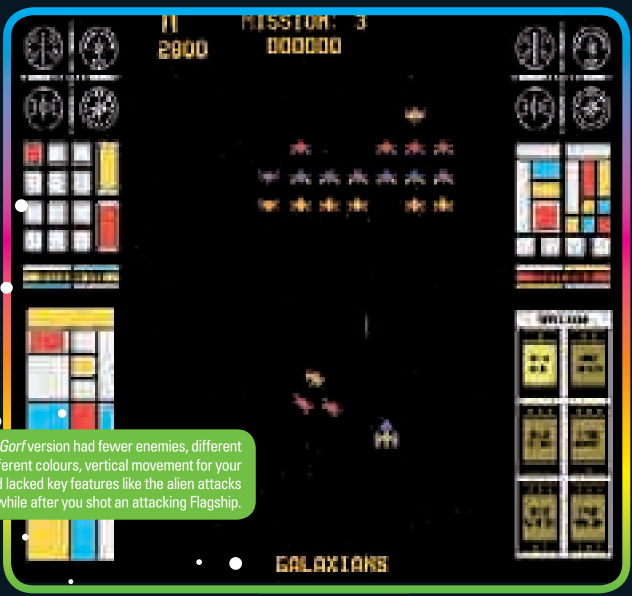
1979

One of the bestselling coin-ops in history, *Galaxian* is also one of the most-converted (and most-cloned) games of all time. In the last ten years or so alone, Namco has re-released it at least 12 times on various formats, and official ports of varying quality have appeared on pretty much every successful home gaming format since 1982 (and a fair few unsuccessful ones too). It's not just nostalgia that keeps it on game-store shelves though – even 27 years later Grandpa *Galaxian* is still a fine game, easy for anyone to grasp immediately but with an uncompromising challenge that'll keep you coming back for high scores long after other "retro" releases have been consigned to the Cupboard Of Broken Memories.

PLAY IT NOW ON: *Namco Museum 50th Anniversary* (PS2, Xbox, Gamecube, PC) finally has a proper conversion of *Galaxian*, replacing the rather weak one included on earlier Namco retro releases.



» What few people realise is that it's you, not the aliens, who is the "Galaxian". Original arcade flyers clearly refer to "the Galaxian defenders of the Earth".



» The *Gorf* version had fewer enemies, different scoring, different colours, vertical movement for your ship, and lacked key features like the alien attacks ceasing for a while after you shot an attacking Flagship.

1981
GORF (ARCADE)

The root of the family tree from which *Wario Ware* ultimately grew, *Gorf* collected five mini-games into a single whole, including officially licenced cut-down revisions of *Space Invaders* and *Galaxian*. The latter was called *Galaxians*, giving birth to a widespread misrepresentation of the parent game's title that persists to this day, irritating this writer beyond rational limits when clueless idiots write about the singular original using the plural title of the *Gorf* version. I mean, you don't write about *Space Invaders* and refer to it "Astro Battles" because that's what it was called in *Gorf*, do you? Tch.

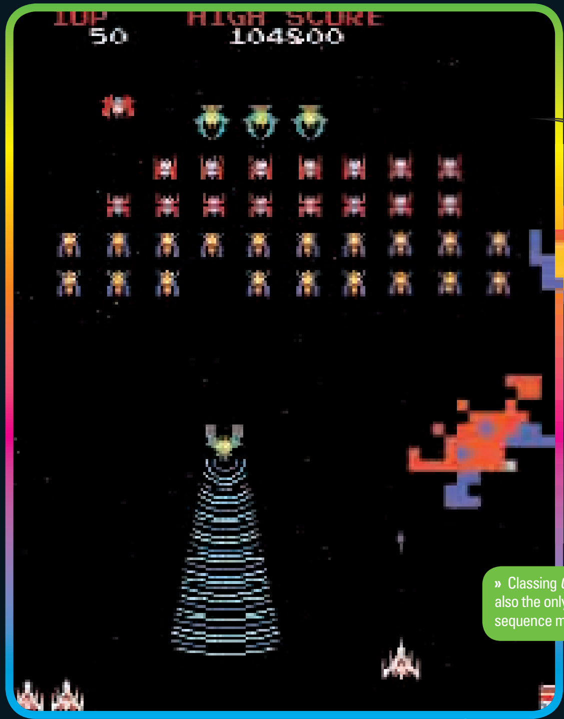
PLAY IT NOW ON: Despite being a very famous game, there's never been an official retro release of *Gorf* (possibly because of the complicated licencing issues), so MAME is your only option – the handful of home ports at the time (including the C64, Colecovision and Atari VCS) all omitted the "Galaxians" mini-game.

1981
GALAGA (ARCADE)

While it wasn't explicitly referred to anywhere by Namco as being related to *Galaxian* at all, this was one of the most beloved sequels ever. (TRIVIA FACT! Galaga is the name of the planet the aliens come from.) While retaining the identifiable essence of the original, *Galaga* is a fuel-injected remake, speeding and polishing the whole thing up and adding a clutch of pioneering features, the best-loved of which are the "Challenging Stages" – after every few normal levels you get a little relaxation break, where the aliens swoop and dive onto the screen but can neither shoot nor ram you, and are only there to be blown away for bonus points. It was a great idea, and subsequently got stolen by countless games outwith and beyond the *Galaxian* series.

The US arcade release of *Galaga* by Midway includes a little-known "proto-continue" feature borrowed from *Gorf*, which isn't present in any of the Namco versions – operators can set a dipswitch whereby putting an extra credit in allows the player to play a single-player game with more ships, usually seven instead of the normal three. Midway tried this feature in a small handful of its arcade games at the start of the Eighties – *Wizard Of Wor*, *Solar Fox* and *Omega Race* were others to offer it – but it wasn't popular and was soon abandoned, later to be replaced by proper continues.

PLAY IT NOW ON: *Namco Museum 50th Anniversary*, or the disappointingly un-enhanced, but bargain-priced, Xbox 360 Live Arcade version.



» Classing *Galaga* as "Galaxian 2" is also the only way the series' naming sequence makes any kind of sense.



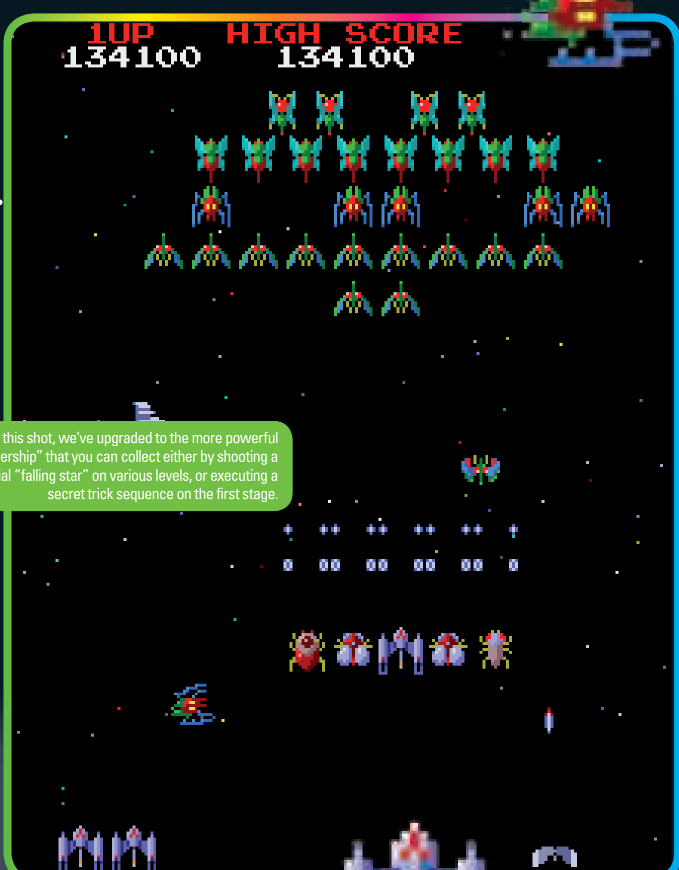
» The enemies in *Sega-Galaga* might not be fancy as their flash city cousins, but their attacks are relentless.

1983

SEGA-GALAGA (SG-1000)

This is a strange and oddly titled little version of *Galaga*, pared down to the bone but still holding onto the recognisable character of its daddy. (The title, incidentally, may be a forerunner of the way so many DS games nowadays have subtitles starting with the letters "DS".) Almost everything's been cut out – there are no Challenging Stages, no hit percentage displayed at the end, no hidden splitters, no extra kamikaze aliens in the incoming waves, and the Boss Galaga never spins a captured fighter around to tempt you into shooting it. These factors make the game vastly easier for as long as you can collect and retain the double ship, but there's a downside – if you allow the alien formation to assemble, it takes up a huge area of the screen and they attack in large numbers almost from the off, making it very hard to either keep your double ship or stay alive with a single ship. These factors make for a very concentrated challenge where a single mistake is even more catastrophic than usual, so it's well worth checking *Sega-Galaga* out even if you're over-familiar with "real" *Galaga*.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The best SG-1000 emulator is the multi-system Meka.



» In this shot, we've upgraded to the more powerful "Hypership" that you can collect either by shooting a special "falling star" on various levels, or executing a secret trick sequence on the first stage.

1984

GAPLUS AKA GALAGA 3 (ARCADE)

Apparently it's pronounced "GAP-lus", rather than "Ga-PLUS", in case you were wondering. The third arcade game in the series took at least as big a leap forward from *Galaga* as that game had from *Galaxian*. The most radical innovation was your ship's ability to move vertically as well as horizontally (possibly derived from the *Gorf* incarnation), but there were all sorts of other new features (including "Tofu Attacks", where shot aliens turned into deadly bean curds, and no I'm not making that up), with a wide variety of power-ups and secrets to discover. Most fun was a variant of the Boss Galaga's tractor beam, with which you could capture up to four aliens and have them act as wingmen to your ship – especially useful during the new Challenging Stages, in which you had to "juggle" small groups of aliens in the air by shooting them repeatedly until they spelled out the stage's bonus prize (indicated by words like "DOUBLE" and "EXTEND"). However, the game wasn't that popular, perhaps because of the dramatic difficulty spike after the first few levels, where fast-moving waves of enemies materialise from above, below, left and right and zip around at speeds – your poor ship and its one-directional fire just can't cope.

A later modification kit changed the onscreen title to *Galaga 3* to try to better capitalise on the *Galaga* name – spot the continuity error there? – though the relevant Challenging Stages still spelled out the word "GAPLUS". Strangely, after the widespread porting of the earlier games, the only format to get a home version of *Gaplus* at the time of the coin-op was the C64, where a faithful but almost totally grey conversion went straight to budget label Mastertronic without ever seeing a full-price release.

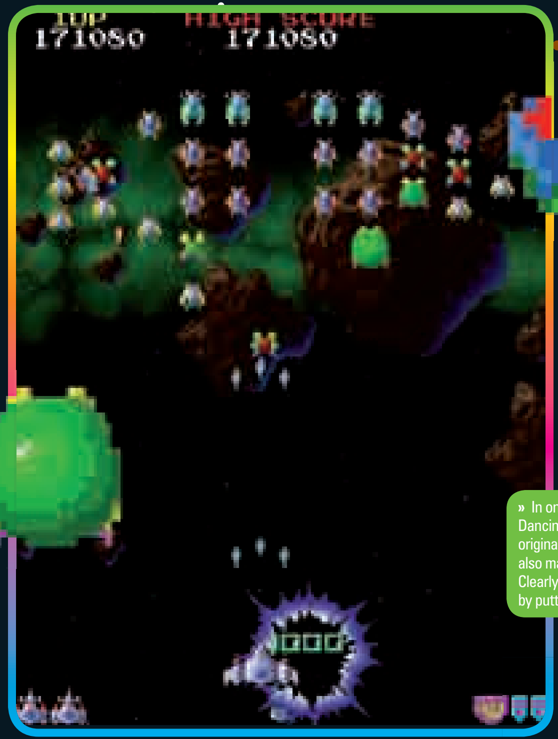
PLAY IT NOW ON: *Namco Museum Volume 2* on the PSone hosts the only arcade-perfect home release of *Gaplus*.

1987
GALAGA '88 AKA GALAGA '90 (ARCADE/PC ENGINE)

Widely acknowledged by all right-thinking aficionados (definition: people who agree with me) as the finest game in the *Galaxian* series, *Galaga '88* was a sparkling return to form after the flawed and slightly overcooked *Gaplus*. Anchoring your ship back to its traditional single axis at the bottom of the screen and doing away with most of the power-ups (though you could now build a triple-firing super-ship by rescuing two kidnapped fighters from Boss Galagas rather than just one) made things more accessible, while a route-branching, multiple-endings structure compensated for the resulting loss of depth. Hang on – endings? Yes, this is the first *Galaxian* game with an end, where collecting "dimension warp" crystals from destroyed enemies/obstacles enables you to jump to higher levels and see the story pan out in various ways, to more and less satisfactory conclusions.

The other particularly loveable feature of *Galaga '88* (only the port for the US version of the PC Engine, the Turbo Grafx, released in 1989, was called "*Galaga '90*") is the nature of the Challenging Stages, which here take the form of a series of little skits called "That's Galactic Dancin'" in which the aliens call a brief truce and put on a flawless display of formation ballroom, performing a delightful mambo or military two-step for your entertainment.

PLAY IT NOW ON: MAME and the Magic Engine emulators cover both versions.

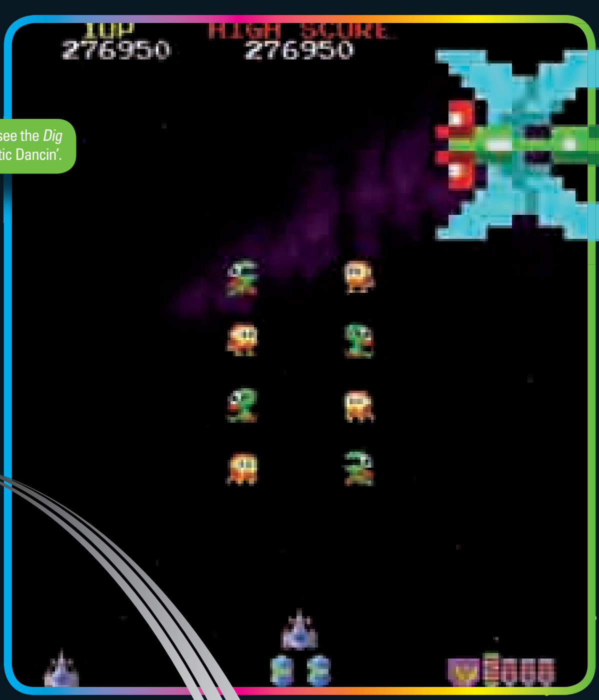


» In one of the coin-op's Galactic Dancin' stages, some of the original aliens from *Galaxian* also make a cameo appearance. Clearly, we wouldn't spoil it for you by putting it in this screenshot.

1990
GALAGA '88 ARRANGEMENT (SHARP X68000)

The port for the Japanese Sharp X68000 computer, in addition to a normal *Galaga '88* mode, features an Arrange Mode with all-new Galactic Dancin' sections, starring characters from classic Namco properties (*Pac-Man*, *Dig Dug*, *Mappy*, *Rally-X* and *Xevious*, as well as the previous *Galaxian* titles) doing routines based on their own games with remixed versions of their music. Unlike any other version, X68000 *Galaga '88* can also be set to allow continues (the coin-op flyer claims this feature for the arcade game, but it's not there). Cruelly, though, you can't continue on the final dimension, so if you go into it on your last life you're pretty much boned.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The excellent WinX68K emulator runs *Galaga '88* very nicely, in the correct aspect ratio and everything.



» Here, clearly, we see the *Dig Dug* stage of Galactic Dancin'.

1990
GALAXIAN3 (ARCADE)

Has there ever been a more gratuitous "sequel" than this? Personally, if I'd come up with a gigantic "arcade theatre" sitting six players, running an on-rails laserdisc-based shooter with overlaid 3D polygon graphics on a colossal double screen, in which each player takes control of a different gun turret of a massive space battleship, I'm pretty sure my first thought on giving it a name wouldn't be "Hey, I wonder if we can work this into the *Galaxian* line somehow?" Nevertheless, that's what Namco did, though it drew the line at coming up with any sort of justification for the connection. It's a pretty bad game, five minutes in which your actions have little if any apparent effect on the onscreen action, and the single-player follow-up *Star Blade* pulled the idea off a lot better. There were three separate *Galaxian3* episodes – the original coin-op was subtitled *Project Dragoon*, and was followed in 1994 by an arcade sequel, *Attack Of The Zolgear*. The 1995 PlayStation release featured *Project Dragoon* alongside a rather dull new episode called *The Rising Of Gourb*.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The PlayStation conversion is fairly authentic – not to say that it's good – despite an ugly "seam" down the middle of the display where two of the coin-op's screens joined, and some choppy digital targeting which makes it hard to play for more than ten minutes without motion sickness.



» At least this shot sort of resembles *Galaxian* from a first-person viewpoint, a bit.

1991

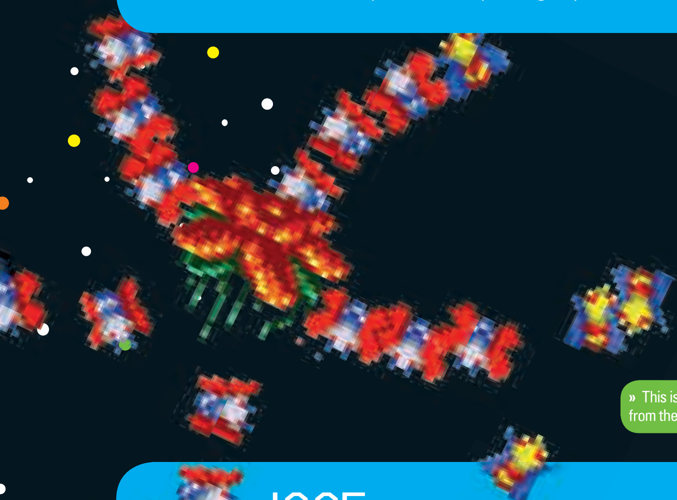
GALAGA '91 AKA GALAGA 2 (GAMEGEAR)

Ah, so THAT'S where *Galaga 2* went. A mere seven years after *Galaga 3*, at first glance this seems like a simple port of *Galaga '88*, with the same graphical style and sound effects, but in fact it's a whole new sequel. All the waves are different, there are new types of enemies, there's no triple ship, no warping, and there are no continues or passwords, possibly to make up for the fact that you only have to defeat ten attack stages before you meet the final boss. You can finish *Galaga '91* in roughly 12 minutes from pressing Start to seeing the end sequence, but don't be fooled into thinking that means it's a pushover. This is a game really well designed for its format, perfect for addictive little bursts on the journey to work (and well within the fruit-fly lifespan of the Game Gear's batteries), and you'll need an awful lot of tries before you can make it to the end of those 12 minutes intact.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The splendid multiple Sega systems emulator Fusion.



» The "Galaga 2" moniker, incidentally, is only found on PAL-territory versions, which are rarer than wings on a badger – the much more common "Galaga '91" is the Japanese release.



» This is a fairly typical exhibition from the *Arrangement* aliens.

1995

GALAGA ARRANGEMENT (ARCADE)

This update, which was never released on its own and only appeared on the compilation coin-op *Namco Classics Collection Vol.1* (alongside similar original-and-updated versions of *Xevious* and *Mappy*) is more like one long level of Galactic Dancin' than a proper *Galaga* game. The rainbow-coloured space bugs rarely do anything so mundane as settle into a formation, and instead spend all their time thinking of ever more flamboyant ways to enter and leave the field of play, squeezing as many stuntman aerobatics as possible into the intervening time and flinging out a few bullets (which are almost the only way of telling a normal wave from a Challenging Stage) seemingly as an afterthought.

It's hard to engage with something whose inhabitants show little if any interest in your existence (or any determination to end it, if attacking you would mess up a nice bit of synchronised swooping), and while *Galaga Arrangement* is by no means a bad game – it's pretty and fast and tough, with innovations like different ship upgrades depending on which kind of Boss Galaga you let yourself get captured by, the best of which is a three-way shot which ricochets entertainingly from the screen edges – the chances are that even though it only takes about 20 minutes to play through (you can have a clock displayed onscreen if you want to beat your record), your attention will wander off some time before you meet King Galaspark at the end of the 30th and final stage.

PLAY IT NOW ON: *Namco Museum 50th Anniversary*, or the earlier import-only PS2 release of *Namco Museum*.



1996
SD GUNDAM OVER GALAXIAN (PLAYSTATION)

Here's this feature's big news, a game that almost nobody has ever heard of and which deserves a better fate. Licenced by Bandai (who gave a similar treatment to *Space Invaders* around the same time, but that's another story) and only published in Japan, *SD Gundam Over Galaxian* ties Namco's classic shooter in with Bandai's own popular little cartoon robot toys in a game with four varied play modes. At the core is Galaxian Remix, a basic version of standard *Galaxian* (but with robots instead of space bugs) which can be extensively customised with optional power-ups and enemy reinforcements, and viewed in anything from the traditional side-on perspective to full first-person 3D. Then there's Gundam Story mode, where you tackle about 20 levels arranged in pairs – one standard *Galaxian*-type wave with few enemies, then a second wave with a multiple-hit boss who gets introduced between the two stages (unfortunately, all the story stuff is in Japanese, but you don't need to read any of it, or sit through the rather tatty cutscenes, to play the game).

The third option is G-Changer Story mode, which offers you six different robots to choose from, whose respective stages you can play in any order, with an all-new power-up structure involving charging various super attacks with accurate shooting. When all six pairs of stages are defeated, you choose one of the robots again and play two new waves, after which you get the same end sequence regardless of which robot you picked. Must have been a pretty weird story. The final game is VS Mode, a two-player game of Remix (and you need a real other player, as there's no CPU opponent available) whose most notable characteristic is that the two players can't pass each other – if they collide, they try to shove each other into the corners. Various victory qualifications can be selected, based on either reaching a certain score or clearing a certain number of levels (though if a player runs out of lives they automatically lose no matter how far ahead they might have been), and the simple addition of the "barging" makes it a very entertaining and surprisingly tactically-sophisticated battle.

The three one-player games are all pretty easy (the story modes can be knocked off in about 15 minutes each), perhaps reflecting the target market of "people who'd buy little plastic toy robots", but if you eschew the power-ups and play from one of the more testing viewpoints you'll get a whole new *Galaxian* experience, and one that's no soft touch.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Shows up very rarely on eBay, but it does run perfectly in ePSXe.



» The little robot baddies are cute, but they just don't have the character of the original's insecty antagonists.

» The PC version of *Destination Earth* at least provides some kind of retrospective link between the *Galaga* games and *Galaxian3*.

2000
GALAGA: DESTINATION EARTH (PLAYSTATION, PC)

A few years ago, Hasbro embarked on a massive programme of updating classic arcade games for the PlayStation and PC, with varying levels of success – its PS remake of *Pong*, for example, was one of the greatest games ever released for the console, while its *Centipede* and *Missile Command* updates were complete wastes of time and money. *Galaga: Destination Earth* fell somewhere in the middle. The bits where it resembles *Galaga* are pretty good, combining features from the previous games (like *Gaplus*' drone-capturing tractor beam) with pleasant new polygon graphics and inventive twists like stages played from a side-on perspective. Sadly, too much of the game was taken up with the 3D sections (reminiscent of *Galaxian3*, although actually closer to *Panzer Dragoon* in play), which were a confusing and unfocused mess where it was remarkably hard to figure out where you were, where you were going, what you were shooting at and what you were supposed to be doing.

PLAY IT NOW ON: The game works fine on modern PCs.



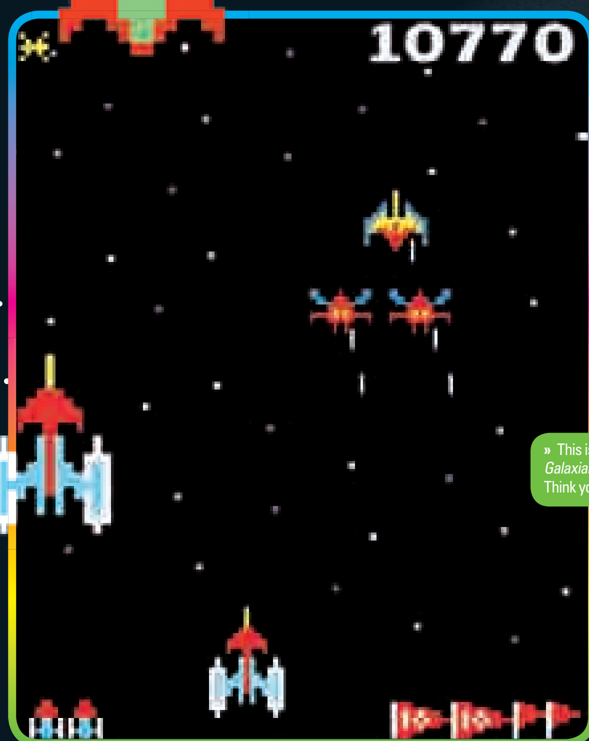
» The stages scroll horizontally as well as vertically, so it's easy to lose track of the occasional enemy and get plastered (or even shot from off-screen) because the huge graphics allow little room for manoeuvre.



2000
GALAGA: DESTINATION EARTH (GAME BOY COLOR)

Not even passingly related to its namesake, this is basically a standard 2D *Galaga* with scrolling backgrounds. There are no Challenging Stages, no bosses, and every level seems to be exactly the same except for the backdrop, which changes every few rounds. There's one power-up available, which changes your shots to asterisks but has little appreciable other difference and which runs out after a little while. (I think they count as double hits – useful only for taking out flagships since everything else dies after one hit anyway – but the collision detection is so poor it's hard to be certain.) Basically a significantly worse version of *Sega-Galaga*, this is incredibly easy and deeply rubbish.

PLAY IT NOW ON: Multi-system Game Boy emulator Visual Boy Advance.



» This is pretty much *Galaxian Mini* at its toughest. Think you can handle it?

2002
GALAXIAN MINI (MOBILE PHONE)

There are now various pretty-authentic ports of *Galaxian* and *Galaga* available for mobiles, but this little oddity is worth a separate mention. Written in the era of *Snake*, when mobiles were still in a fairly primitive state for gaming, *Galaxian Mini* cuts down the parent game to its skeleton. Just three aliens appear at any one time, in various little micro-formations, with typically a dozen or so making up each short level (a reinforcement flies in whenever you shoot one of the three). It does its best, bless it, with faithful graphics and enemy behaviour, but the restricted attacking power means it never gets very difficult, and the chances are you'll be bored before you're dead.

PLAY IT NOW ON: *Galaxian Mini* is fairly widely available for lots of phones, but it also runs in the hard-to-find "N-Gage Cool!" emulator for the PC if you can track down a copy.



2005
GALAGA ARRANGEMENT (PSP)

Confusingly, this inclusion on the *Namco Museum Battle Collection* isn't the same game as the arcade/PS2 *Galaga Arrangement*, but a whole new remix of the classic title. It's worthwhile enough in itself, with some impressive gigantic boss bugs, but the really interesting thing about *PSP Museum* is that it marks the only ever official connection between the *Galaxian* and *Galaga* lines – on the Korean release of the collection, the original game isn't actually called Galaxian at all, but instead goes by the name of "Old Galaga", in a triumph of quality investigative journalism that officially justifies this whole feature. Well, *I* think it's interesting, so shut up.

» It's nice that the entire piece didn't have to be based on a groundless assumption.

2006

GAPLUS PHALANX (PLUG-IN TV GAME)

This extremely obscure member of the Galaxifamily is found on the *Namco Nostalgia 2* plug-in TV game released in Japan earlier this year. Each of the dinky little mobile-phone-sized mini-consoles (there are four in the series at the time of writing) contains two classic arcade ports, each paired with a brand-new spin-off game. The *Gaplus* spin-off is *Gaplus Phalanx* (the Phalanx Attack was the name of the original *Gaplus*' feature whereby you could capture enemies and convert them to drone ships), in which you don't shoot at all, but use your tractor beam to capture formations of blue aliens while avoiding capturing red ones. It's basically a Challenging Stage crossed with a puzzle game, as you have to work out how to use your beam to slow down your jittery movement and shift the dangerous red aliens out of the way to get to the blue ones, but there's plenty of excitement as you pick your way through fast-moving waves of various sorts, trying to gather every last blue bug. Only once you've done that, chums, can you finally claim to be a master of the *Galaxian* universe.

PLAY IT NOW ON: We don't know of anyone importing these yet, but if you're lucky enough to have a chum in Tokyo you can get him to pick you up one for about £15. Don't forget to buy the separate power lead and TV cable too, though.



» Over on the left there you can see the word "BONUS" starting to form, just like in the original game's Challenging Stage.

THE GANG MAY OR MAY NOT BE ALL HERE

When writing features like The Definitive X, where there's always more information to convey than room to convey it in, it's hard to know what to do about things like this. Namco's 1991 release *Cosmo Gang – The Video* is absolutely obviously a *Galaxian/Galaga* game, but isn't explicitly acknowledged as such – then again, as we've seen, *Galaga* was only very recently, and very obscurely, explicitly acknowledged as being related to *Galaxian* at all, which kinda shoots that rule down. In either event *CGTV* deserves some attention, as it's completely lovely. Most closely resembling *Galaga '88* in play, and featuring the characters from an arcade redemption game (seen here as a Challenging Stage, and which also appears in *Point Blank DS*), it adds a bunch of fun power-ups, score multipliers and varied scenic backdrops to the classic template, and zips along with a relentlessly cute charm that keeps you entertained and captivated through 32 demanding levels, until you meet the giant Mafia crab Don Cosmo at the end. If you include it in the *Galaxian* line it's a strong contender to *Galaga '88* for the "best of series" accolade, and if you don't you still shouldn't miss it.

PLAY IT NOW ON: There was an excellent SNES conversion released in Japan, but for full vertical-screen glory it's MAME you want.



» Unusually for a coin-op of the time, Cosmo Gang doesn't get stupidly and unfairly hard three minutes in.



DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?



DATAFILE

NAME: OWEN RUBIN

DATE OF BIRTH: 15.9.1954

FIRST JOB: MANAGING AN ELECTRONICS WAREHOUSE

CURRENTLY: VP OF APPLICATIONS FOR RAPPORT (SEMICONDUCTOR COMPANY)

FAVOURITE FILM: THE LAST STARFIGHTER



» Owen at Atari in June 1979 with Rick Moncrief and Dave Stubben.

OWEN RUBIN

HE JOINED ATARI IN THE EARLY DAYS AND PRODUCED A STRING OF ARCADE HITS, INCLUDING THE WONDERFUL SPACE DUEL AND VECTOR OPUS MAJOR HAVOC. HE WENT ON TO HAVE A BALL AT BALLY AND TAKE A BITE OUT OF APPLE'S BUDGET. SO WHY ISN'T HE BETTER KNOWN? PAUL DRURY DISCUSSES FACIAL HAIR WITH OWEN RUBIN.

YOU MUST PLAY...

Major Havoc

Hugely ambitious and replete with deft touches, *Major Havoc* arguably represents the pinnacle of colour vector design. Gorgeous space combat, a line drawn hero with real character and a thoughtful learning curve that steadily reveals new strategies and surprises make this Owen's most rewarding game. It remains a stern challenge and finding a working cabinet is an even greater test. "Maybe if I'd done it in raster, it would have done better commercially," he acknowledges, "but it wouldn't have looked as good." Amen to that.



» With the bomb planted, it was time for a sharp exit.

"It was the moustache," concludes a now clean-shaven Owen. "The guy in charge of graphics kept putting other engineers in Atari publicity shots, but never me. I asked why and he said it was my moustache. It wasn't the image they wanted! I did get in a few shots, but I was either out of focus or they just used the back of my head..."

Even before Owen had cause to worry about razors, he was living in Atari's shadow. He grew up in San Francisco, getting his first taste of computers in High School using a Bendix G15, often considered the first personal computer. After graduating from the University of California at Berkley, he moved the short distance to San Jose and got his first job in 1976 at the still small company, becoming software engineer number 3.

"Atari was the ultimate job," he enthuses. "Everything back then was business-orientated and here was my chance to play! Little did I know how hard it would be."

Appropriately enough, it was suggested his first project should involve firing someone out of a cannon. Owen set about coding *Cannonball*, a sweet little affair that tasked the player with loading the weapon with gunpowder and then launching the hapless hero towards a brick wall. A well-judged trajectory would see the Evel Knievel wannabe successfully fly through a moving gap in the brickwork to a roar from the crowd. Get it wrong and he'd smash against the hard surface with a sickening splat.

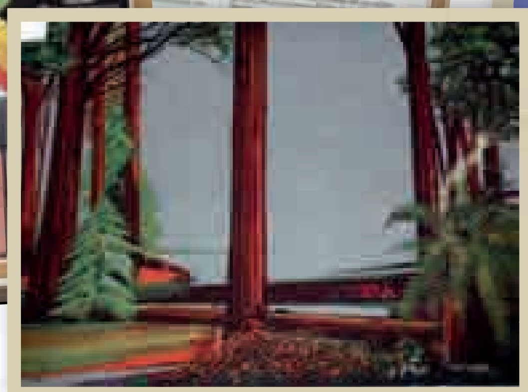
"I created that sound effect by taking a microphone and oscilloscope into the shower and slamming wet paper towels on the floor. I coded the pattern it made into the white noise generator, but it came out a little more bone-crunching than I'd planned. Management thought it was a bit too graphic."



» Owen threw himself head-first into his first project for Atari, *Cannonball*.







» **Above and right:** The ingenious *Triple Hunt*, with interchangeable screens and lovely hand-painted backdrops.



» **Above:** Light up the letters on *Skydiver's* marquee and you get a bonus – a nod to Owen's beloved pinball.

But then Atari management had a famously hands-off approach back then. Young Owen had almost completed the game by writing the code on paper and then punching in the numbers by hand via a teletype. He proudly showed the stream of paper tape to his bosses at his first review, only to learn there was a team of secretaries on site to do it all for him.

"It would have been nice if they'd told me that at the start," laughs Owen, ruefully. "I'd even been editing my code by splicing in extra bits of paper to go over bits I didn't want the computer to read into the system."

Now he could throw away the scissors and get down to more human carnage. *Skydiver*, released in 1978, was considerably more ambitious. Parachutists tumbled from a plane and the player had to consider wind speed, velocity and an ever-shortening landing pad to avoid another nasty accident on the tarmac. "It was going to be over water, but the management actually asked for the splat to come back for that one."

The bar had been raised and Owen now had all God's creatures in his sights. *Triple Hunt* updated the traditional mechanical shooting gallery game with ingenious use of half-silvered mirrors to display computer graphics over interchangeable backgrounds. "We really took it to a new level," Owen explains. "The cabinet had real depth and we even put masks in, so the creatures would seem to be hidden. A bear would walk between trees or a witch would fly out the window of a haunted house. It was a beautiful effect."

Owen was clearly in the hunt. His growing confidence and abilities led to experiments in 3D and inspired by the descent scene in the film *Alien* – he produced the prototype *Tube Chase*. Using clever custom technology constructed by Dave Sherman, Owen had his space ship swooping through tunnels made of concentric vector circles.

"It looked great – the tunnels would split and you'd have to choose your route – but it was just so expensive. Marketing kept asking for changes to make it cheaper. First the circles went, then the branching tunnels… I must have revised that game a dozen times over three years. It was always one more thing! In the end we tried to sell it to Exidy, who called it *Vertigo* and eventually it was released as *Tunnel Hunt* by Centuri. It still had the Atari logo in there – I'd written this complex interactive code to prevent anyone removing the name and it had been so long in development, I'd forgotten where I'd hidden all the protection!"

The diluted game, now a hypnotic raster blaster, was too late to market and bombed. But Owen had kept himself busy. In 1978, he produced a raster version of the daddy of them all, *Space War*, for the European market. Entitled *Orbit*, it has the dubious distinction of sporting the most buttons ever seen on an arcade cabinet – a whopping 18 in its first incarnation. And soon after, he would have his biggest hit. *Space Duel* began as colour *Asteroids* and was intended to be Atari's first colour vector title. When the original programmer suffered a nervous breakdown, Owen took up the reins – literally, as the twin spaceships on screen were tethered together.

"I liked that idea of co-operation and competition. Those ships really do have weight and can pull each other round the screen. It has inertia and momentum. If one player got hit, he was crippled but could still fire one shot instead of four. In head-to-head mode, it meant he might just be able to score enough points for an extra life. It was a way of keeping both players involved and rewarded."

"WITH BATTLEZONE, I KEPT ASKING ED IF THE VOLCANO WAS ERUPTING YET. HE SCREAMED BACK AT ME, "GODAMMIT OWEN, YOU WRITE THE F***ING CODE!"" OWEN RUBIN

The game required a graphical overhaul when Atari released *Asteroids Deluxe*, so Owen replaced the floating rocks with intricately drawn aliens that twisted and spun in graceful faux 3D. He added bonus waves, force fields and gave enemies their own ruthless AI. There was to be no lurking in Owen's outer space – these foes would track you down.

"There were a lot of strategies in *Space Duel*," he notes. "In the head-to-head game, shooting your opponent gets you 500 points and winks him out for a while, but when he comes back, he has renewed shields. I started to notice that players low on shields would drift out and get shot on purpose to get new shields. And in the co-op game, you still have an individual score, so one player could be like, "Hey, I've got four times as many points as you – you're not carrying your weight!""

Thus the competitive game could be co-operative and the co-op mode could get competitive. Is there perhaps an analogy here with the whole setup at Atari coin-op?

Owen laughs. "Yeah, there was always a co-operative nature at Atari and people would help each other – to a point. But



» Skydiver: Another game from Rubin that once again puts man in mortal danger. We're sure it's a metaphor for something…

A QUIET DAY AT THE OFFICE

Irked that Atari's Consumer division were getting all the attention and advertising budget lavished on them, Coin-op decided to make their own spoof ad. *A Day At Atari* featured contributions and cameos from such luminaries as Ed Rotberg, Howie Delman and of course Owen.

"I'm claiming production credits on that one," Owen states. "I own it and show it at events like California Extreme sometimes. It has stuff like me doing a voiceover saying, "Not every Atari game is successful, but we know what to do with those" and we throw this *Asteroids Deluxe* machine off a second floor balcony. It smashes to pieces and the camera zooms in on the coin door. This kid walks past, stops and puts a quarter in and then kicks it in frustration. Then we filmed Howie playing *Atari Football* against this girl. She's winning and Howie's sweating and not concentrating. The camera pulls back and you can see she's topless. I go, "Nothing holds your attention like an Atari game. Well, almost nothing…""



» Though far removed from its vector roots, *Tunnel Hunt* is worth booting up on MAME, if only to admire the headache-inducing 3D…



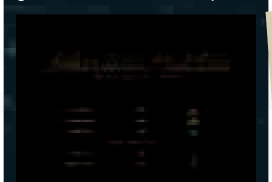


» Owen's moustache gets its one shot at the big time.

SO SUE ME…

Owen had intended *Major Havoc* to reach the fabled home world after level 16, and bring down the evil empire by infiltrating a large maze, destroying four generators and blowing up the planet. The released version repeats levels 12 to 16 on an ever-increasing difficulty setting, but Owen left one clue to the ending he had first planned.

"There's a message on one of the tactical screens that says "Keep playing the home world is near". I'd forgotten about that. After I left Atari, I got this letter saying some kid had spent a fortune on the game trying to get to this home world. He'd sent a photo of himself on level 57, which means he must have been really, really good. There was a letter from his attorney too, saying they were going to sue Atari, because no matter how hard he played, he couldn't find this planet! Management asked me what they should tell him. I was like, "Tell him he forgot to turn left at level 23. What do you want me to tell him – that it doesn't exist?" They paid him a $1000 and gave him a cabinet to keep."



» 'Sue Atari – $1000' was strangely missing from the attract screen.

"I KNOW ONE WRITER REALLY LOVED THE IDEA OF CLONES IN MAJOR HAVOC. FINALLY SOMEONE HAD EXPLAINED WHY YOU GET MULTIPLE LIVES!" OWEN RUBIN

we had this god awful bonus system that improperly rewarded programmers whose games did well and penalised those doing behind the scenes stuff. I did development systems, VAX stuff, IT support, sound routines… but even if my code was used in a game that was earning a big bonus for the programmer and engineer, it didn't earn me a nickel."

Thankfully, Owen didn't let the injustice stop him putting in his 25 cents worth. He shared the early macros and sound effects he'd produced for the colour vector system with Dave Theurer to use in *Tempest*. He bounced ideas around with Ed Logg which resulted in *Super Breakout* and the addition of the DDT to *Millipede*. Most famously, though, he brought a little fire to Ed Rotberg's *Battlezone*.

"Ed and I sat back to back in the same office and every morning I'd stick my face in his screen and say, "Is that volcano erupting yet?" He'd had enough and screamed back at me, "Godammit Owen, if you want it to erupt, you write the f***ing code!" So I came back half an hour later with 30 lines of code and he stuck it in… and when he saw those volcanoes erupting, he laughed and laughed. I wrote some other code that made the earth in the sky 'set'. Everything would get dark and only the shots and flame from the buzz bombs would show. That got left out because they thought it would make the game too hard. Once they saw how long people played *Battlezone* for, they agreed they should've left it in…"

In between adding a little pizzazz to some Atari classics, Owen was busy working on his own. *Major Havoc* began life as *Tolian's Web*. Taking its name from an episode of *Star Trek* and influenced by Owen's love of *Battlestar Galactica*, the game, which reached the prototype stage, had the same space/landing/maze structure that would define Major Rex Havoc's adventures.

"People thought I was nuts going from first-person to third-person in the game. We thought about making the maze first person, but it was too demanding on the hardware. Man, just getting that guy running around the maze and bouncing off the walls properly took me three months! To get a convincing 3D effect in the space levels, I used vector scaling of the images on the fly and hand drew all the ships, so even though it was all playing on a flat, square playfield, it looked three dimensional. They didn't call me Owen 'No Maths' Rubin for nothing!"

Owen brought all his accumulated programming knowledge to bear on the project, designing an innovative animation driver that allowed the work of graphic artist (and Atari's VP of Engineering) Lyle Rains to come alive. The Major could walk, run, jump and even collapse, clutching his throat, if his oxygen supply expended. He included a



» The button-strewn control panel of *Orbit*. Who said you don't need 37 fingers to play old games?



» The beautiful *Space Duel*, proving two ships are better than one…



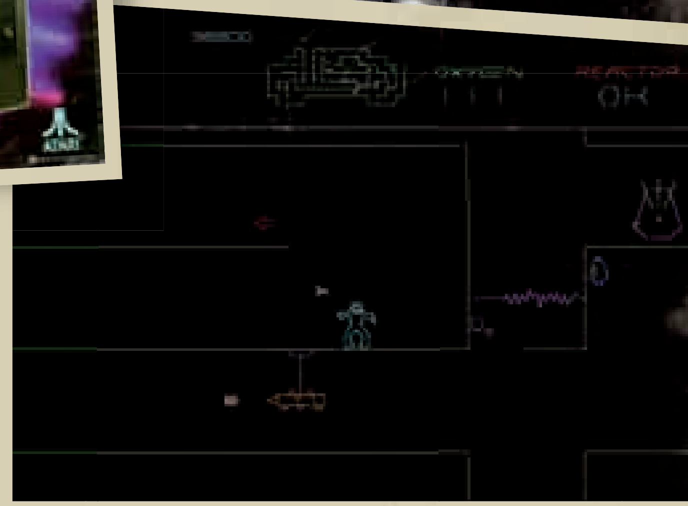
» Owen at the controls of *Battlezone 2* with (l-r) Lyle Rains, Dona Bailey, Ed Rotberg and designer Jeff Boscole. "It was complete nonsense," quips Owen. "Jeff must have been on a bad trip."





» **Above:** Owen busy at his Vax System at Bally/Sente in 1985. **Right:** A flyer for *Major Havoc*. Look closely and you'll spot the bizarre 'barrel' trackball controller.





» The mighty *Major Havoc* – Owen's last and best game for Atari. How those vectors shone…

long back story, something of a first for an arcade game, chronicling the struggle of an enslaved race that sent clones of themselves to battle against their oppressors. "I know one writer really loved the idea of clones," remembers Owen. "Finally someone had explained why you get multiple lives!"

The game was crammed with wonderful touches. On the tactical screen, the heartbeat monitor increases as the action intensifies and a playable *Breakout* game runs in the cockpit – "I figured if the pilot got bored travelling through space to his next destination, what would he do? Play a videogame!"

Most memorably, leave the Major standing motionless next to a wall and he'll lean against it and tap his foot impatiently, a trick employed by a certain blue hedgehog years later. The similarity was more than coincidental. A year into the mammoth project, management insisted Owen was joined by a young, headstrong new recruit named Mark Cerny, who would later work on the *Sonic* games in Japan.

"They wanted him to cut his teeth. He was pissed he was being put on an existing project and I was pissed that I was forced to have him. But I gained a lot of respect for Mark. He was really talented and had one of the best minds for what's fun and what's not in a game, but he could be incredibly arrogant too. I liked him a lot, but he was hard to be around sometimes."

So like the archetypal TV cop duo, the wise old hand and brash rookie formed a formidable team. Yet as the game neared completion, the interference of an increasingly incompetent Atari management became their biggest challenge. Things came to a head after an all-night coding session, when a particularly loathsome boss ordered them to put in another 12-hour stint to implement a change he had designed. Grudgingly, they agreed, only for their manager to nonchalantly wander in the following morning and tell the two tired and smelly coders to put it back the way it was immediately.

"I stormed in to his office and told him to go f*** himself – I quit. Atari ended up begging me to come back and finish the game, which I did on the condition I didn't have to have anything to do with that bozo."

Thus *Major Havoc* was to become Owen's Atari swansong. It did exceptionally well for a vector title, but its release coincided with a loss of confidence by arcade owners in the reliability of vector hardware and the infamous videogames crash that would see the once mighty Atari brought to its knees. Owen opted for voluntary redundancy in 1984 and joined Bally Sente the week after he left. It turned out to be like a home from home.

"They had lots of ex-Atari staff there – Howie Delman, Roger Hector, Ed Rotberg. On my first day at Sente, Ed led me in to his lab to show me what they were working on. There was a *Tube Chase* cab right there! He smiled and said, "Now Owen, we just need one more change…""

The banter was back and so was the Blue Sky thinking. Whilst the titles Owen worked on during his three years at Bally Sente are obscure compared to his Atari output, they all shared a surprising prescience. *Name That Tune* pre-empted modern day DVD music quizzes; *Shrike Avenger* pioneered motion cabinet technology, though Owen acknowledges that the game had a worrying tendency to eject players from their seats; and *Grudge Match*, an overhead racer that allowed players to pimp their rides, has echoes in the obligatory customisation options of most modern driving games.

"There was only one *Grudge Match* ever produced and when Bally Sente closed, it was left out on field test in a Golf Land some place. Someone found it years later and you can play it on MAME now. I wanted to do so much more with that game. If you ran a red light, the cops would chase you… so many ideas that never got done…"

Sadly, it was to be Owen's final entry in his videogame portfolio. His involvement with the industry continued though. He joined Interactive Productions, a Rob Fulop start-up company, and helped develop a system that allowed Commodore 64, PC and Mac computers to seamlessly communicate for online gaming. He spent seven years at Apple, working on hardware and software and ingeniously devised a way to produce a single boot-up CD to replace the 36 floppies bundled with each Mac, saving the company a fortune. Since 2000, he has worked for numerous start-up enterprises and has still found time to get involved with Food Programmes for the homeless in his native California and pen serious product reviews and some very funny rants for myriad publications. Something of a Renaissance Man then, Owen?

A modest chuckle. "A job has got to teach me something. What drives me is being told something can't be done. I'll either show you it can, or tell you why you're right. I like a challenge."

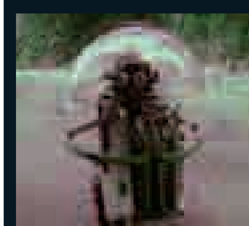
And on the day before his wedding, he finally faced up to his biggest challenge – he shaved off that troublesome moustache. "I only grew it to look older. And then I was."

"WHAT DRIVES ME IS BEING TOLD SOMETHING CAN'T BE DONE – I'LL EITHER SHOW YOU IT CAN, OR TELL YOU WHY YOU'RE RIGHT" OWEN RUBIN

Many thanks to Owen for the images used in this article, to which he retains all rights.

IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN GRASS

Owen has kept in touch with some of his old Atari buddies – he was Ed Rotberg's Best Man and still exchanges Christmas cards with Mark Cerny – and one of his former colleagues actually lives in his garage. "Kermit the Robot was built by this Think Tank Engineering group at Atari. I rescued him and realised he just needed some programming. I gave him some intelligence, so he'd do stuff like run down halls and do random things like wolf whistle. Sadly, one day he didn't detect some stairs. He let out this R2-D2 scream and fell down them and that was the end for Kermit." To see the cute but battered Kermit, along with more of Owen's game stories, entertaining rants and a wealth of Rubin-related information, head to: www.orubin.com.



» Kermit, proudly wearing his Atari Personnel badge, prepares to meet his nemesis: stairs.

DESERT ISLAND DISKS

WHAT CHERISHED GAMES WOULD YOU TAKE TO THE ISLAND?

OWEN RUBIN DESERT ISLAND DISKS

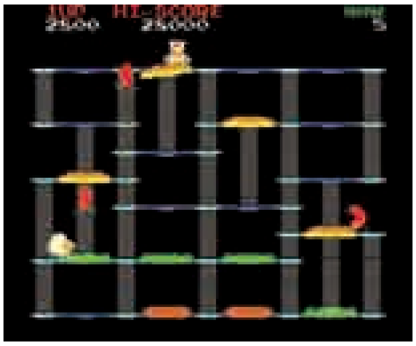




MAJOR HAVOC

ARCADE

1 Okay, this is one of mine, but with all the levels that Mark Cerny added on at the high end, it is still fun and there are still challenges for me. It plays well these many years later.



BURGER TIME

ARCADE

2 There is something fun about this game that continues to be fun. And the commercial sticks in my mind to this day, "We closed now!" I guess you had to see it. It was a close call with this one and *Food Fight* actually, but something about being chased by a hot dog and a fried egg…



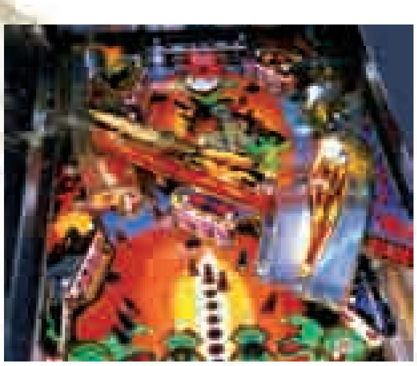
FUN HOUSE PINBALL

3 This is one of my all time favourite pinball games. With Rudy, the talking head, being very obnoxious and the very complex and addictive game play, this is one game that is hard to walk away from.



HIGH SPEED PINBALL

4 One of Steve Ritchie's best, this is a fast-paced game based on a true story in his life. The game is high speed and very fun.



BLACK KNIGHT

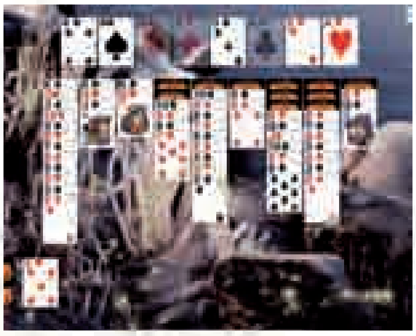
PINBALL

5 Okay, three of my games are must-have pinball machines. This is one of Steve's early games and one of his greatest. There is nothing worse than a game that laughs at you when you make a mistake! Had some amazing new ideas and one of the first with a magnet in the playfield.



BEJEWELLED 2 PC

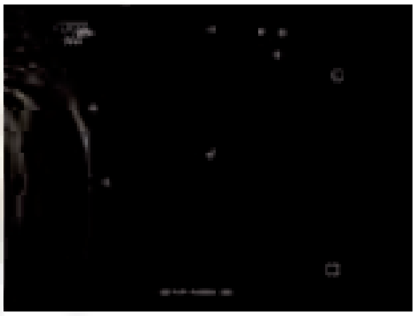
6 This is actually on my Palm Treo 650 and it gets more and more addictive as you play on. Not sure why it is a favourite, but I sure play it a lot.



ERIC'S SOLITAIRE

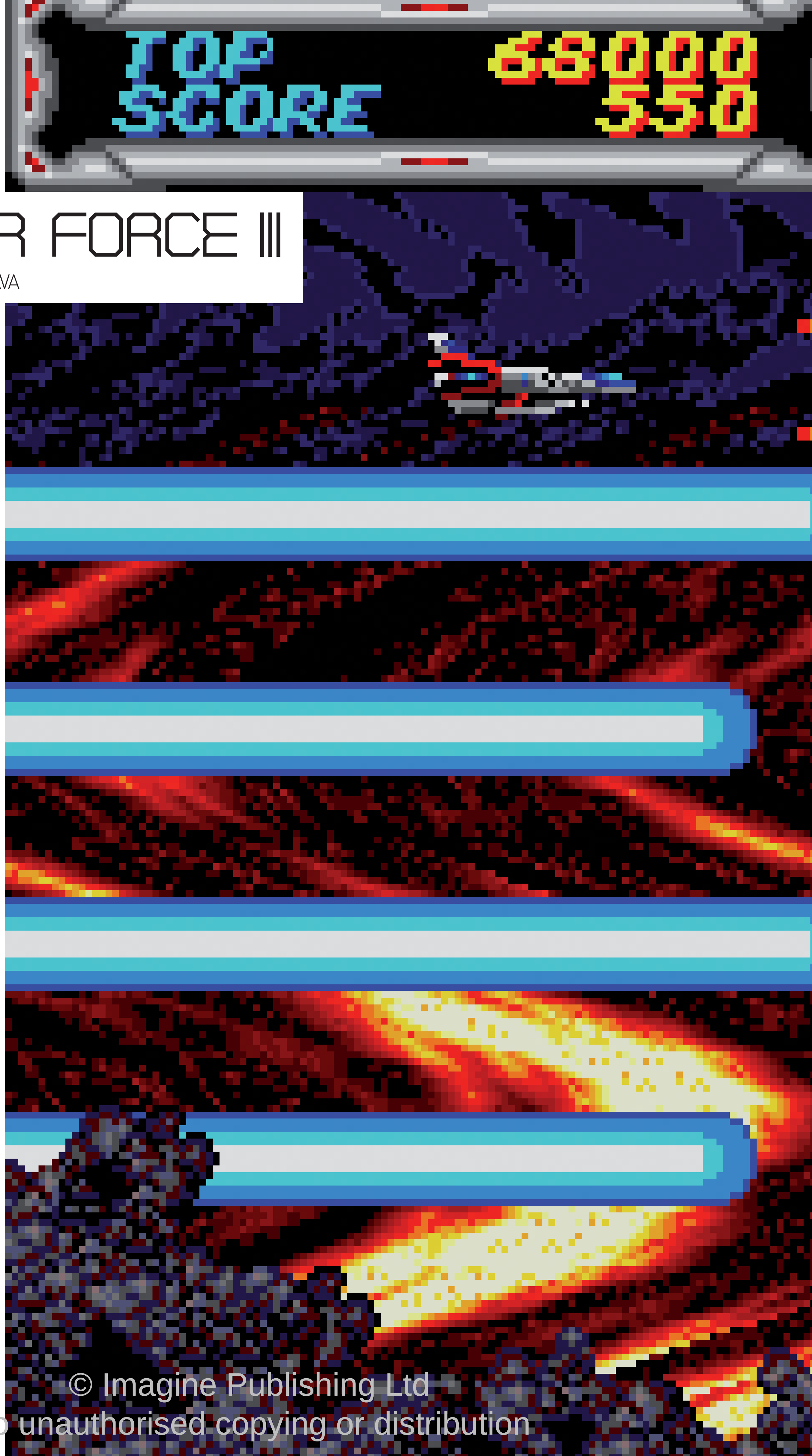
PC

7 Again on my Treo 650. Everyone plays some kind of solitaire and this has every type of solitaire in one game. A great time sink, some excellent display features and as many games of solitaire as you could ever want to play. Now, if they would just let me cheat!



ASTEROIDS ARCADE

8 Yes, it is addictive, it is annoying, it is hard, and it is a damn lot of fun.



THUNDER FORCE III

SINGING LAVA, LAVA, LAVA, LAVA



- **PUBLISHER:** TECHNO SOFT
- **RELEASED:** 1990
- **GENRE:** SHOOT-'EM-UP
- **FEATURED HARDWARE:** MEGA DRIVE
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £10+



HISTORY

While the PC Engine and Saturn are considered as the home consoles of choice when it comes to collecting shoot-'em-ups, we'd also like to give a big "thumbs up" to Sega's Mega Drive.

Often cited as the machine of choice for platformers, RPGs and arcade conversions, Sega's 16-bit console nevertheless boasts a stunning array of shooters, many of which are as enjoyable to play today as the day they were first conceived.

Perhaps the most famous shooting franchise (on the Mega Drive at least) is Techno Soft's superb *Thunder Force* series, though, interestingly, only *Thunder Force II* and *IV* only ever actually appeared on the UK Mega Drive. This is a real shame, as, in my humble opinion, the missing third game is easily the best of the three.

Of course, many will argue that the aesthetics and general level design of *Thunder Force IV* is far superior to anything seen in *III* and to a certain extent they'd be right. To me though, *Thunder Force III* just seemed to have far more personality to it and it remains my favourite shooter on the system.

Even though, Techno Soft's second Mega Drive shooter was aesthetically inferior to its younger peer, it still managed to impress with its visuals. Anyone who turns around and says that they weren't struck dumb when they saw the firery world of Gorgon (pictured on the right) for the first time is either blind or a liar, and as the levels continued the worlds just got better and better.

Indeed, everything about *Thunder Force III* was superb. The weapon system was varied and featured some excellent power-ups, the music consisted of a variety of banging tunes that never outstayed their welcome, while the many bosses you fought were absolutely huge and featured plenty of inventiveness on the part of Techno Soft.

Yes, *Thunder Force III* is far from original (it rips off everything from *R-Type* to *Gradius*) and yes the sequel was far, far better; but for me at least this was as good as it got (at least until the Saturn's *Thunder Force V* came along).



RETRORATED



In a change to our normal reading schedule, we interrupt this Retro Rated Roundup to bring you information on a series of gaming tomes. There's been a huge increase in such books over the years, too many to cover, but these are those we had close to hand.

THE VIDEO GAMES GUIDE

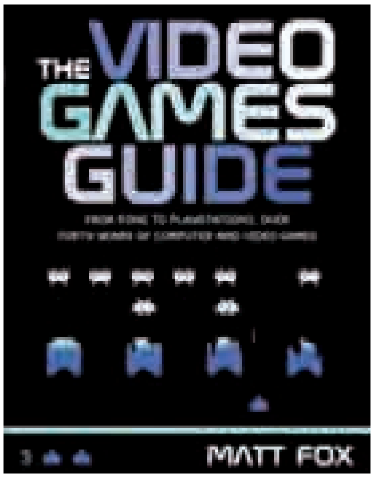
INFORMATION

- » **AUTHOR:** MATT FOX
- » **PRICE:** £16.99
- » **ISBN:** 0-7522-2625-8

No, we refuse to be carried along by the publicity for this. It's been touted on press releases and all manner of high-profile publications, even being offered as an expensive accompaniment to the Game On exhibit. Except it's terrible.

It's basically 500 plus pages of Matt Fox's opinion on some games he once played. Unfortunately we have no idea who this Fox character is, and therefore to have a publication based solely on his opinions is pointless – he's no Lester Bangs, that's for sure. The choice of games also seems totally random, while the in-game screens are abysmal and not what you'd expect from a £17 book.

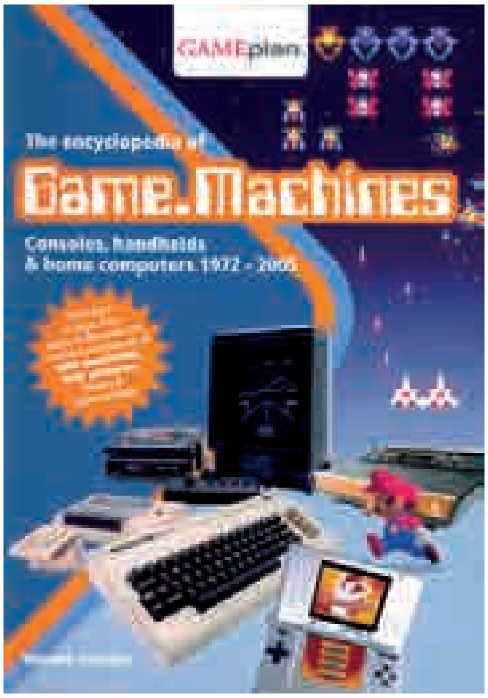
Furthermore, it is riddled with the kind of inept errors that not even Wikipedia makes when allowing drunken civilians to add entries. The first time we randomly opened it, at *Final Fantasy I*, we spotted glaring errors. Don't buy it, and if someone gives it to you as a gift, use it to bludgeon their faces. We'll take the blame. (Not a legally binding promise.)



THE ENCYCLOPEDIA OF GAME.MACHINES

INFORMATION

- » **AUTHOR:** WINNIE FORSTER
- » **PRICE:** £17.95
- » **ISBN:** 3-00-015359-4



The Encyclopedia Of Game.Machines **was originally a German book and it's been greatly expanded and translated into English; you have to give Winnie Forster credit for being so ambitious with this encyclopedia (and let's not moan about spelling, the use of "ae" is an archaic English throwback after all).**

The Encyclopedia Of Game.Machines sets out to cover every single system ever, and while some machines are limited to only a single page or merely a very short entry in the back, we were honestly unable to find any omissions (and we did try our damndest). The hardware photography is excellent and has amazing images of some exceedingly rare items (such as the Microvision) – unfortunately nearly all in-game shots are grossly distorted.

The information is sometimes limited due to space but, while some will disagree with the highly subjective opinions adopted, generally it's always of a high quality and a great resource (especially for release dates).

Despite some flaws like the poor in-game shots, anyone even remotely interested in games should love this book. It comes highly recommended. We're finding it most useful.

GAME OVER

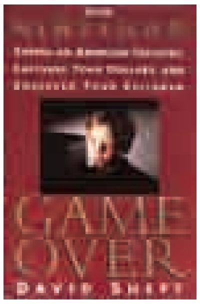
INFORMATION

- » **AUTHOR:** DAVID SHEFF
- » **PRICE:** VARIES
- » **ISBN:** 0-679-40469-4

This is it, the big granddaddy of them all. Although Sheff himself cites several previous books and articles relating to videogames as influencing him, *Game Over* was perhaps the first big publication to not only accurately examine the medium but also grab everyone's attention.

While it may be over 13-years-old now, originally published in 1993, it set valuable precedents and even today is still an amazing piece of reference material. Such is its all-encompassing and indulgently comprehensive scope, that even though it's no longer in print we had to include it in this round up.

Containing inside information about Nintendo which had, until that point, never been widely available, it is the ultimate digest about one of Japan's biggest games companies, and the one which defined an era. It contains Nintendo's entire history from humble origins, through to the release of the SNES, and everything is interspersed with fascinating anecdotes about key figures' daily lives.



It was reprinted several times, later being edited down given away free with Arcade magazine, so searching online or at second-hand book stores should yield results.

PSX: THE GUIDE TO THE SONY PLAYSTATION

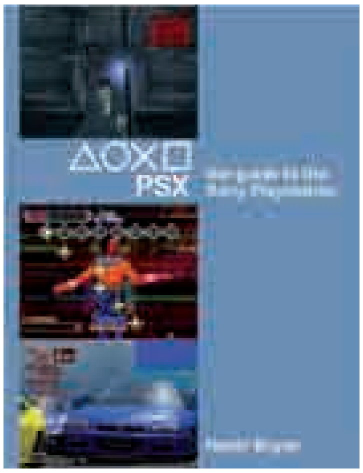
INFORMATION

» **AUTHOR:** KEVIN BRYAN
» **PRICE:** FREE/$28.99
» **ISBN:** N/A

This guide to Sony's first system was compiled by various members of Digital Press, www.digitpress.com/products/psxbook.htm, and can either be bought as a hard copy or downloaded in PDF format for free (check www.lulu.com).

Being free it's difficult to raise fault with this. It contains unwatermarked images of the prototype SNES-CD add-on, several early iterations of PlayStation pad design, lengthy and comprehensive game listings (some with explanations), many bizarre curios available for the system, plus fascinating interviews with Sony executives (like Bill Rehbock, who reveals some interesting things about the company's inner workings).

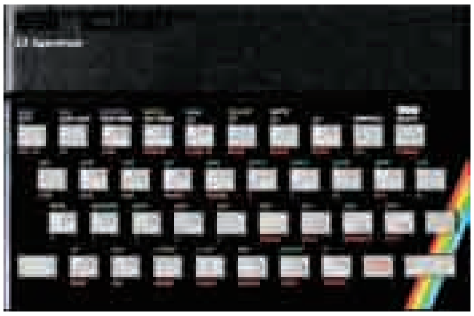
Unfortunately, it's a book aimed more at hardcore collectors than people who are simply curious about the games. The bulk of the book is simply listings of every American released PSone game, with SLUS code, year of release, genre, publisher, developer and estimated price listing. That's it. Some games have proper explanations, but it's mainly a big list. Even so, you can't fault it. It's free and has some utterly fascinating bits of info in it.



THE ZX SPECTRUM BOOK 1982 TO 199X

INFORMATION

» **AUTHOR:** ANDREW ROLLINS
» **PRICE:** £19.99 (POSTAGE: £4.50)
» **ISBN:** 0-9779983-8-X



This is what we like to see: a homegrown labour of love covering something special about the British Isles – the ZX Spectrum and its many, many games! It's not a comprehensive encyclopedia of all the releases (that would require thousands of pages), and instead cleverly focuses on around 250 of the system's more interesting releases. Not necessarily the best, but those which are interesting.

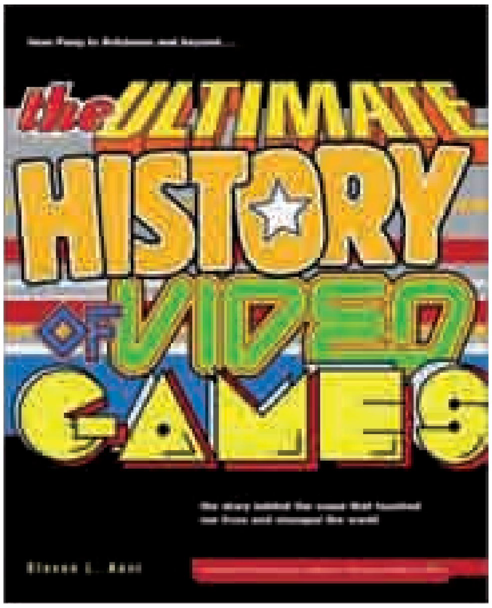
To highlight the amount of effort that has gone into it, the opening has even been penned by Sir Clive Sinclair himself. The production values meanwhile are very high, with glossy colour images (consisting of in-game screens and cassette overlays). Previews of various pages can be found at www.zxgoldenyears.com, which should convince you of its quality.

Finally available, having been over a year in the making, it's essential reading for anyone who owned a Spectrum. But hurry, because only 1000 copies are being printed and half of those have already been pre-ordered.

THE ULTIMATE HISTORY OF VIDEO GAMES

INFORMATION

» **AUTHOR:** STEVEN L KENT
» **PRICE:** £14.99
» **ISBN:** 0-7615-3643-4



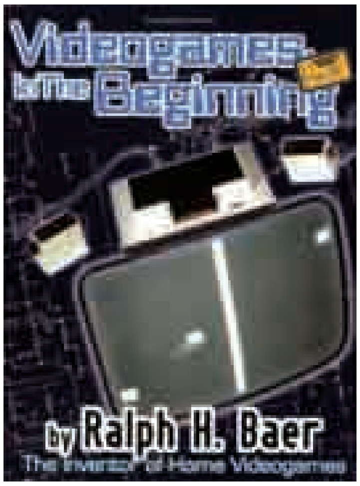
Crikey! At over 600 pages this is one of the biggest game books we've ever seen, and it's also one of the best. It's bigger than Matt Fox's box, has better screens, is saturated to bursting with direct quotes from dozens and dozens of prominent industry figures, while covering more and from a serious investigative journalist point of view, plus, the coup de grace is that it's cheaper than Fox's poor effort.

Even without the comparisons, this is still one of the best videogame books ever published. It understands and respects the medium (in a way Steven Poole's *Trigger Happy* never managed), and is bolstered by countless interview quotes. Best of all is that we were unable to find any factual errors – some subjects were mentioned a little too briefly perhaps, but there was nothing overtly incorrect. This sets an almost impossible to eclipse precedent, and without question we can say that Mr Kent deserves your money. It's a book every gamer should own and read.

VIDEOGAMES: IN THE BEGINNING

INFORMATION

» **AUTHOR:** RALPH H BAER
» **PRICE:** £29.99
» **ISBN:** 0-9643848-1-7



The origin of videogames, with *Pong* and Ralph Baer's Magnavox Odyssey, might at first thought not seem like the most exciting of subjects. As part of the overall history maybe, to show the historical roots, but an entire book? We were decidedly sceptical. And yet, similar to *Game Over*, this concentration on a singular subject actually benefits the book. It's an exhaustive 250+ page account, told by Baer himself, of what he started in the early Fifties.

It's a story less about the games and the machine, and more about the man behind it: his vision and the people he worked with. What makes it so utterly fascinating is the tiny, almost superfluous details present throughout. Full reprints of diagrams and documents are presented, along with many personal photos, some from inside his home: adverts, flyers, photos, entire galleries of everything connected to those early days. Granted, some are of a low quality, but it doesn't detract from what is a fascinating account of how the industry was born. This is well worth a look.

» THE ONE THAT GOT AWAY

SONIC RIVALS

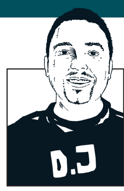
SONIC RUSH CAN SLEEP EASY



- **SYSTEM:** PSP
- **PRICE:** £34.99
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** BACKBONE ENTERTAINMENT
- **PLAYERS:** 1-2

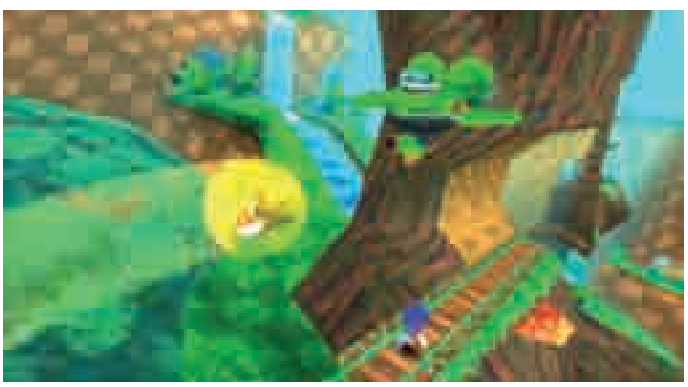


» If you squint very hard, you can almost imagine that this is a 2.5D version of Green Hill Zone. Almost.



If there's one thing we hate at Retro Gamer it's wasted opportunities. Take Backbone Entertainment's *Sonic Rivals* for example: it's got all the ingredients to be one of the greatest *Sonic* games ever devised, but somewhere along the line too many different gameplay suggestions have been added and it's become a melting pot of half-baked ideas.

This in itself is rather a pity, as conceptually *Sonic Rivals* is as sound as a proverbial pound. Each of the main levels requires you to do nothing more than race an opponent to the finishing post over two stages, before facing off against one of Dr Eggman's massive mechanical bosses. In theory it works a treat and your first race through the verdant vegetation of Forest Falls will instantly recall the brilliance of *Sonic The Hedgehog*'s Green Hill Zone. Sadly, once the first zone is dealt with quite a few annoyances start to rear their ugly head…



» Here at Retro Gamer we have a vast dislike of Shadow the Hedgehog, so we're pleased that he's eating our dust.



OPINION

If you take out all the enemies and dubiously placed springs, *Sonic Rivals* becomes a decent game. The core racing mechanic is flawless, and on certain levels, reveals *Sonic Rivals*' potential as an exhilarating take on the 2D *Sonics* of old. Sadly, the annoying catch-up system, and level five's insanely difficult Death Yard Zone will convince many gamers that *Rivals* just isn't worth bothering with. Shame.

Simon Phillips

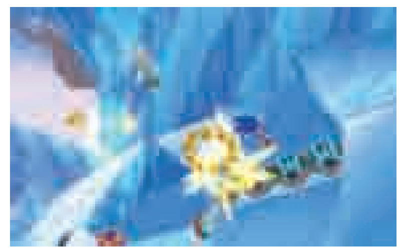
For starters, *Sonic Rivals* has one of the most-unfair catch-up systems since Nintendo's *Mario Kart* series. There's nothing worse than speeding your way through a level, only to loose it at the last moment when your rival manages to pick up the best power-up for what seems the hundredth time and pips you to the post. It's made even worse by the fact that this catch-up system applies to your opponent only, so if you do lag too far behind, you don't have a hope in hell of catching up. Then there's the annoyingly placed springs and enemies that will often appear out of nowhere because of the insane speeds that you're travelling at, and are therefore impossible to avoid. *Sonic* games should rely on skill and reflexes to get you through each stage, not blind luck and the ability to remember where every potential pitfall is.

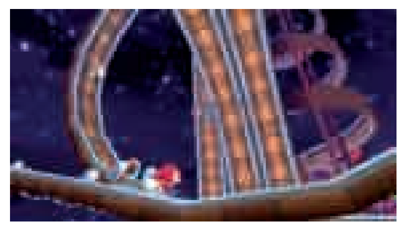
What starts off as a potential return to the *Sonics* of old becomes (in some stages at least) one of the most frustrating videogame experiences we've played. Still, it's not all bad. The cards you collect greatly add to the game's longevity, the challenge and cup circuit add further to the gameplay, while visually, it's the most arresting looking game we've seen since *Ultimate Ghosts 'N Goblins*. If only the gameplay was a little more balanced…

IN SUMMARY

It pains us, but *Sonic Rivals* could have been so much better. While we can understand the direction Backbone Entertainment has taken, it would have been nice to see it throw caution to the wind and just make a no-thrills racer.

RATING **70%**





» There are four playable characters to begin with, but collecting cards yields many new ones.

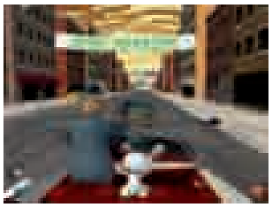


OPINION

I think Darran is being generously polite when describing *Sonic Rivals*. Yes, the concept is ingenious: a *Unirally* style racer set in the *Sonic* world. Unfortunately, the gameplay is fundamentally broken on so many levels it's difficult to know where to start. *Unirally* was super slick and focused primarily on good racing, as opposed to avoiding hazards. If *Sonic Rivals* was as minimalist and streamlined, it would have been awesome.

John Szczepaniak

LAUGH OUT LOUD HILARIOUS



- » **SYSTEM:** PC
- » **PRICE:** $8.95 OR $34.95 FOR FULL SEASON
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PUBLISHER:** GAMETAP
- » **DEVELOPER:** TELLTALE GAMES
- » **PLAYERS:** 1



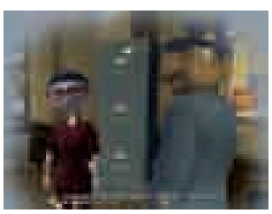
Funny. That's a good word to describe *Sam & Max: Culture Shock*. It is also, shamefully, a word used less and less to describe modern games. Developers today seem fearful of humour, creating increasing militaristic games from grey and brown only. What happened to boisterous and flamboyant comedy? *Sam & Max* is the perfect antithesis to a world too afraid to laugh.

But here's the (perhaps only) problem with the game. How do you articulate such comedy in a review, without spoiling things? So much of the joy comes from unravelling the demented plot and puzzles. Moreover, the subtleties of timing would be lost with the printed word. Describing the discovery of a gumball machine which has no sweets in it, and is instead filled with baked beans, might seem amusing in the abstract, but it can never convey the impact of Sam's sardonic response. Simply take our word for it, the jokes work, are very frequent, and each multiple-choice situation can be replayed to wring all of the comical juice out of it. It's gag central, baby! So strap in and enjoy the wild ride while it lasts. Even if you don't "get it", since the series is episodic, you've only lost a fiver on the first instalment. Being episodic is one of its strongest points, and the system in place is painless.

There might not be much tactile gameplay but, when everything is so painfully funny, it honestly doesn't matter. *S&M* is such a joyous return to the gleeful adventures of yore, the entire office promptly bought revolvers and began shooting pieces of cheese in celebration. If there are any philistines out there who can't appreciate the hilarity of the scripting, or the genius of the episodic downloadable system, then flip the nine in this score upside down and go play some generic rubbish instead – like *Jaws Unleashed*. This new release of *Sam & Max* is a wonderful return for the deranged comedy duo, and should fulfil everyone's expectations.



» So many witty lines of dialogue, so little time to describe them. Instead, look at this picture. It has a monkey in it.



» Sam has "mother issues" – as represented by this bizarre dream sequence in a shrink's office. The puzzle mechanics are rather clever.



OPINION

The 13-year wait between *Sam & Max* games has been a long, arduous one with very little quality adventures to keep me occupied in the meantime – but now gaming's greatest double act are back and I couldn't be happier. It may not be as challenging as the first but as it's so side-splittingly funny, I'm prepared to turn a blind eye.

Ashley Day

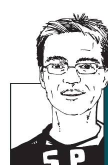
IN SUMMARY

Funny, hilarious, funny, and very mirthsome, enhanced by an episodic download system which works well.

RATING **90%**



» An unconscious ex-childhood-star has wet his pants. The 3D art style is suitably surreal, replacing the previous hand-drawn graphics admirably.



OPINION

I remember the first time playing *Sam & Max: Hit The Road*. It was in a small shack on the outskirts of a potato field in Dresden. I loved it so much I kidnapped the neighbour's dog and made him wear a suit, just like Sam. Playing *Culture Shock* didn't have quite the same result, but shooting soda jerks with onions has never been so funny! Too funny to describe actually – buy it!

Simon Phillips



» *S&M* features dialogue about riding students like ponies. If you're making a perverse connection reading that, then consider yourself subversive.



» Look! It's baked beans, but, they're in a gumball machine. A gumball machine, people, with beans! Absolute madness.

BARGAIN HUNT

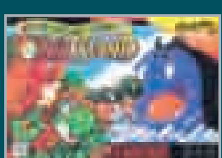
HUNT DOWN BARGAINS OR JUST DRINK UP THE LOVELINESS OF ALL THIS RETRO GOODNESS. FEAST YOUR EYES ON SIX PAGES OF THE VERY BEST THAT RETRO GAMING HAS TO OFFER…

Collecting retro games can be great fun, but you need to have a rough idea how much it's going to cost you. So here for your buying pleasure is Retro Gamer's buyer's guide. Where possible we have endeavoured to list the earliest international launch date, be it Asia, America or Europe. Prices were compiled from a variety of sources, including eBay, Japan auctions, car-boot sales, traders and general consensus. Foreign items will often be cheaper in their local country, so regional differences should be considered. Also, bear in mind that online items will often be cheaper than you will find in specialist stores. If you see an item selling for far less, good for you! We aim to help with finding those bargains, but if you see an item sold for much higher make sure you really want to purchase it. Prices fluctuate and the market sways, so there can never be a concrete listing. Bear in mind that something is worth as much as someone else is willing to pay. No one is perfect though, and we will openly admit that with over 100 different systems to list, mistakes can happen. If you spot a glaring error in our listings, please drop us an email at retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk and let us know about it!

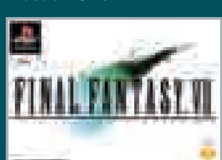
RETRO AUCTION WATCH

Retro Gamer will be sifting through countless pages of eBay and reporting on any items of interest (hardware and software) that have caught our eye. If something has sold for a staggeringly high amount of money (or lower than it normally would) you'll find them listed here.

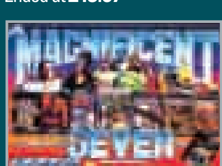
YOSHI'S ISLAND
SNES
Normally Sells for **£20+**
Ended at **£9.36**



FINAL FANTASY VII
PLAYSTATION
Normally sells for **£20**
Ended at **£37.01**



MAGNIFICENT SEVEN
SPECTRUM
Normally sells for **£3+**
Ended at **£13.67**



3DO



3DO GOLDSTAR
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£45+ ($83 - $111)**



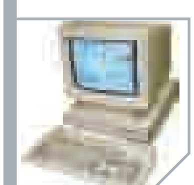
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 - £60 ($74 - $111)**



PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

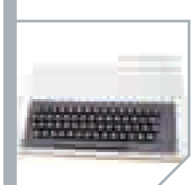
While 3DO systems had much potential, there wasn't enough software support and it eventually stopped production. There were still some great games released!
- STAR CONTROL 2
- RETURN FIRE
- CRASH AND BURN

ACORN



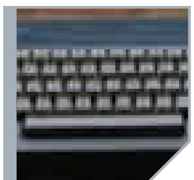
ARCHIMEDES
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (with games)**

Early RISC-based home computer, quite powerful at the time.



ATOM
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**

Extremely old home computer by Acorn that's now hard to find.



ACORN ELECTRON
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

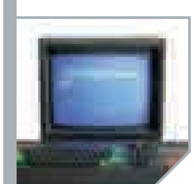
Budget version of the BBC home computer (below).



BBC MICRO
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

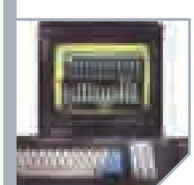
A classic British home computer, and quite popular. Affectionately known as 'the Beeb'.
- EXILE
- ELITE
- WAY OF THE EXPLODING FIST

AMSTRAD



CPC 464
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**

Early classic 8-bit home computer from Amstrad, designed to compete against the C64 and ZX Spectrum. This early model has a built in cassette tape deck. Beware the models that come with a green screen monitor!



CPC 664
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Like the 464, except with a floppy disk drive. A short-lived model that was soon replaced by the superior 6128.



CPC 6128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25+ ($46+)**

Improved model which doubled the RAM of previous iterations. Later 'Plus' models came with a cartridge port.
- RENEGADE
- RICK DANGEROUS
- GRYZOR



GX4000
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**

Console version of the CPC Plus range, came with joypads. Limited range of games.
- BURNIN' RUBBER
- PANG
- SWITCHBLADE

APPLE



APPLE II
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+) (with games)**

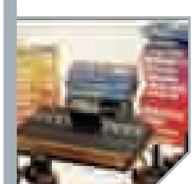
Like many early computers the Apple II was hand-built machine and sold to enthusiasts.
- KARATEKA
- ULTIMA IV
- LODE RUNNER

ATARI



400/800/600XL/XE
» YEAR **1979**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**

Series of old 8-bit Atari home computers.
- DROP ZONE
- THRUST
- ZYBEX



2600 (VCS)
» YEAR **1977**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+**

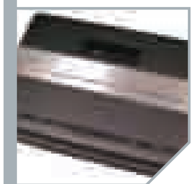
Earliest console by Atari. Various models, many with the classic wood panelling effect. Many UK gamers had their first taste of videogames on this.
- PITFALL
- ADVENTURE
- COSMIC ARK

RARITY GUIDE

- ROCKING HORSE SHIT
- HEN'S TEETH
- LUCKY FIND
- EBAY REGULAR
- CAR BOOT SALE BARGAIN



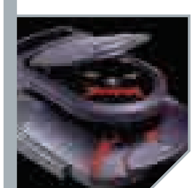
5200
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Unpopular successor to the 2600, regarded as an Atari 400 without a keyboard.
- RESCUE ON FRACTALUS
- DIG DUG
- ZAXXON



7800
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Handily, Atari made the 7800 backwards compatible with the ever popular 2600.
- KARATEKA
- CHOPLIFTER
- WINTER GAMES



JAGUAR
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Failed attempt to beat the PlayStation and Saturn in the console race. Few decent games. But it does have Jeff Minter's *Tempest*!
- TEMPEST 2000
- ALIEN VS PREDATOR
- BATTLESPHERE (RARE AND EXPENSIVE!)



JAGUAR CD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Rare and overpriced CD add-on for the Jaguar. Very few games, but it does look very much like a toilet seat!
- BATTLEMORPH CD
- HIGHLANDER CD
- TEMPEST 2000 MUSIC CD

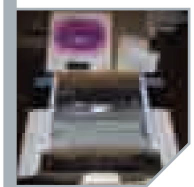


LYNX I/II (2ND IS SMALLER)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
Powerful handheld from Atari that failed due to poor marketing and battery life.
- BLUE LIGHTNING
- CALIFORNIA GAMES
- DIRTY LARRY RENEGADE COP



ST
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) depending on model**
Atari home computer and a big rival to the Amiga. There are many different models of various specifications.
- DUNGEON MASTER
- POPULOUS
- DAMOCLES

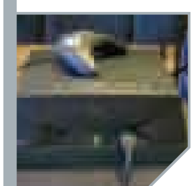
BANDAI



GUNDAM RX-78 COMPUTER
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£75+ ($138+) (prices fluctuate wildly)**
Ultra rare, early Japanese games computer by Bandai. Aimed at both gamers and anime fans. Expect to pay a much higher price for a machine that's in mint condition.



PLAYDIA
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90 ($166) and upwards according to eBay**
Bizarre Japan-only console, apparently made for kids.
- SAILOR MOON
- ULTRAMAN
- DRAGON BALL Z



PIPPIN(ATMARK)
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £500+ ($921+)**
A strange hybrid system from Bandai and Apple. Very expensive and with very few games available. It's high price means that it's normally only sought after by collectors.
- RACING DAYS
- DRAGON BALL Z
- GUNDAM TACTICS



WONDERSWAN (B/W)
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



WONDERSWAN COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL
» YEAR **2000**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**
Handheld system by Bandai, fairly popular. Can now be bought very cheaply, especially in Japan. Be sure to buy the SwanCrystal, which is basically an improved 'Color' model. Both colourised models can run B/W WS games.
- GUNPEY EX
- SWAN COLOSSEUM
- JUDGEMENT SILVERSWORD

COMMODORE



AMIGA500/600/1200
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+) (more with games, depending on model)**
Classic and incredibly popular 16-bit home computer by Commodore, that was designed to compete against the Atari ST range. Vast array of different models, with differing specs, the Amiga 500 (with a RAM upgrade) is a particular favourite with many gamers.
- SPEEDBALL 2: BRUTAL DELUXE
- LEMMINGS
- SENSIBLE WORLD OF SOCCER



C16/PLUS 4
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15+ ($28+)**
The less well known sibling of the C64, but without the compatibility of its peers.
- TUTTI FRUTTI
- MONTY ON THE RUN
- KIKSTART



C64
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
One of the best selling 8-bit home computers of all time. Competed against the Spectrum and Amstrad home computers. Featured the wonderful SID sound chip that was put to amazing use by the likes of Ben Daglish and Rob Hubbard.
- WIZBALL
- MAYHEM IN MONSTERLAND
- PARADROID



C64 GS (GAMES SYSTEM)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Commodore's cartridge-based machine that tried to take on both Nintendo and Sega. Sadly failed due to a lack of support from most publishers.
- PANG
- NAVY SEALS
- BATTLE COMMAND

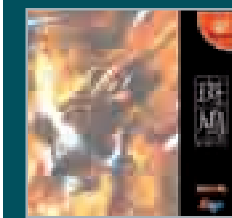


C128
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Three machines (CPM, C64 and C128) in one box. Specialised software is relatively small in number.

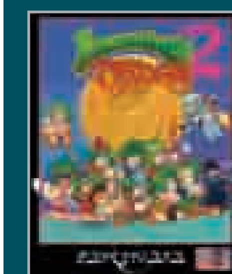


CDTV
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Commodore aimed for the 'every home should have one' market and missed by a country

IKARUGA
DREAMCAST
Normally sells for **£25+**
Ended at **£49.25**



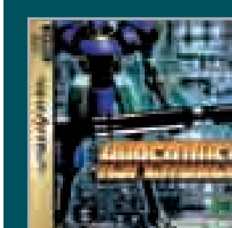
LEMMINGS 2
AMIGA
Normally sells for **£5+**
Ended at **75 pence**



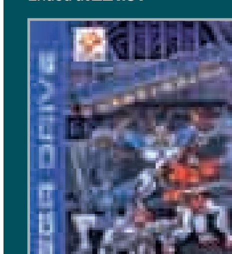
TURRICAN II
COMMODORE 64
Normally sells for **50 pence**
Ended at **£6.58**



HYPER DUEL
SATURN
Normally sells for **£60**
Ended at **£37.01**



PROBOTECTOR
MEGA DRIVE
Normally sells for **£8+**
Ended at **£21.51**



mile. A curious mixture of games and educational material.

CD32



» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

CD-based console that followed on from the experimental CDTV. Sometimes described as a consolised Amiga 1200 with CD drive. Despite featuring some extremely impressive games, the majority failed to improve on their 500 and 1200 counterparts.

- EXILE
- SIMON THE SORCERER
- ALIEN BREED 3D

VIC-20



» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) based on condition/extras**

The computer that established Commodore brand.

- HELLGATE
- SERPENTINE
- SUPER SMASH

FUJITSU

FUJITSU FM COMPUTERS



» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+)**

Early Nineties home computers by Fujitsu.

FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY



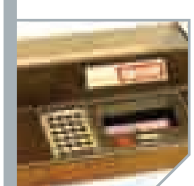
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200+ ($368+)**

A legendary console, which contains both a CD and disk drive. Based on Fujitsu's old FM Towns computers, and mostly backwards compatible with the majority of games. Very expensive, (especially if you find a machine in mint condition), but with a lot of chic!

- ZAK MC KRAKEN
- TATSUJIN OU
- SCAVENGER 4

MISCELLANEOUS

BALLY ASTROCADE



» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Early videogame system that used interchangeable cartridges, developed by the Bally games division at Midway Games.

- GATE ESCAPE
- ICBM ATTACK
- TREASURE COVE

BARCODE BATTLER



» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($18)**

Handheld LCD game, where you must swipe barcoded cards (or barcodes taken from soup packets!) to gather stats, and then battle against someone else who swiped barcodes. We're not making this up…

– Issue 1 of gamesTM
– Coca Cola 500ml
– Lion Bar 3pk

CASIO LOOPY



» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**

More inanity from the land of the rising sun. This is a console designed especially for female gamers and it even allows stickers to be printed out… Casio hoped it would do better than their failed PV-1000 console released in 1983.

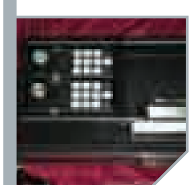
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F



» YEAR **1976**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (from the USA)**

The first commercially released console that used programmable cartridges. A real piece of history. Despite this, it's surprisingly cheap to purchase (although importing from the US may cost a fair amount).

COLECOVISION

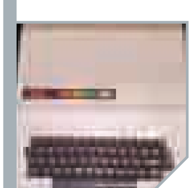


» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) standalone**

Coleco's third generation videogame system. Quite a few decent games, and considering its age it's a fairly powerful machine. Many of its arcade conversions were considered superior to the other systems on the market.

-CONGO BONGO
- SMURPH RESCUE
- CABBAGE PATCH KIDS

DRAGON 32/64



» YEAR **1982/3**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15) (very cheap on eBay)**

Early British home computer that tried to cash in on the early Eighties boom. Short-lived though quite popular. The 64 model was released roughly a year after the 32.

- GRID RUNNER
- DEVIL ASSAULT
- CAVE FIGHTER

ARCADIA 2001



» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Failed console by Emerson, which had numerous different clones released as well.

- FUNKY FISH
- JUNGLER
- ROBOT KILLER

EPOCH CASSETTE VISION



» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

Obscure early Japanese console, which in 1983 had a budget 'Junior' model released.

EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION



» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**

Epoch's successor to the Cassette Vision, which was also marketed in Europe under the Yeno label. Apparently it only had around 30 games released for it.

INTELLIVISION



» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40+ ($74+) depending on extras**

Developed by Mattel, the system was revolutionary. It was the first console to be technically 16-bit, go online (to download games), and it featured voice synthesis. Today it still has a strong retro following.

- FROG BOG
- ARMOR BATTLE
- LOCK 'N' CHASE

ODYSSEY



» YEAR **1972**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

The original home videogame console, even before Atari got in on the act! Created by Ralph Baer, this is the ultimate piece of gaming history. Fortunately, it can be purchased relatively cheaply.

ORIC-1



» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**

The Oric-1 was a highly underrated 8-bit bit home computer created by Oric Products International. Despite having many games that were arguably superior to those on the Spectrum it was sadly unable to compete with the rival machine's high sales.

- XENON1
- INSECT INSANITY
- RAT SPLAT

PLAYSTATION



» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on condition/model**

Another attempt by Sony to enter the videogame hardware market (after the MSX), this time they took over the market. There are countless undocumented yet excellent PS games. Was later re-released as the PSOne, which is more expensive, but looks much nicer in design.

- CASTLEVANIA: SYMPHONY OF THE NIGHT
- FINAL FANTASY VII
- RIDGE RACER

SAM COUPE



» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 - £200 ($92 - $368) (allegedly for a mint system)**

Originally developed by Miles Gordon Technology in Swansea, the Sam Coupe was a unique 8-bit British home computer which didn't fare very well. It could even emulate the 48K Speccy to a degree.

- DEFENDERS OF THE EARTH
- ESCAPE FROM THE PLANET OF THE ROBOT MONSTERS
- PRINCE OF PERSIA

SUPERVISION



» YEAR **1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Marketed by several different companies, this was essentially a cut-price competitor to the monochrome Game Boy. Unsurprisingly, it was not manufactured for very long and is now hard to find.

TIGER ELEC. GAME.COM



» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**

Attempt by Tiger Electronics to compete against the Game Boy.

- RESIDENT EVIL 2
- SONIC JAM
- DUKE NUKEM 3D

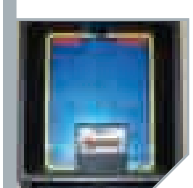
TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)



» YEAR **1983/4**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**

Series of old computers by Tomy.

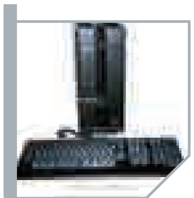
VECTREX (MB/GCE)



» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**

The only home system ever to come with a vector display, enabling true vector graphics.

- SPACE WAR
- SPINBALL
- HYPERCHASE



X68000
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£90+ ($166+)**
Home computer by Sharp, released only in Japan. Famous for its arcade ports.
- CASTLEVANIA CHRONICLES
- STREET FIGHTER 2
- FINAL FIGHT

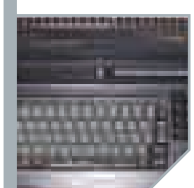
MSX



MSX 1
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+)**
An early attempt to create a standard gaming platform, fairly common in the UK.
- PENGUIN ADVENTURE
- KNIGHTMARE
- THE GOONIES



MSX 2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Updated and more powerful version of the MSX, very popular in Holland and Brazil where even today some excellent homebrew games are developed.
- METAL GEAR 2
- ALESTE 2
- VAMPIRE KILLER



MSX 2+
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
Another hardware update that proved to be very popular in Holland.
- SPACE MANBOW
- GOLVELLIUS 2
- F1 SPIRIT 3D SPECIAL



MSX TURBO R
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30+ ($55+)**
A final and not very popular hardware update, that was virtually exclusive to Japan.
- FRAY
- PRINCESS MAKER
- ILLUSION CITY

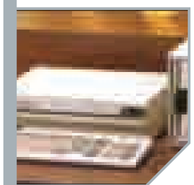
NEC



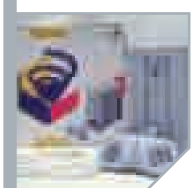
PC-6### (ALSO MK II)
» YEAR **1984 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10+ ($18+) depending on model**
Quite old 6000 series of home computers by NEC, with a lot of cool Japanese games for it. Released in the US as the NEC Trek. Be careful of shipping prices.



PC-8801
» YEAR **1981 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Old computer series by NEC, with several different models over the years. Has a massive roster of cool games, including the original *Silpheed*. While very cheap to buy online from Japan, shipping is expensive.



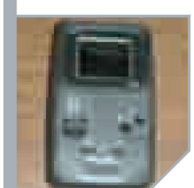
PC-9801
» YEAR **1983 onwards**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (cheap on Yahoo! Japan)**
Another home computer series by NEC, again with many great games. Laptop versions also exist. Most games by Falcom are worth watching out for.



PCFX
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) prices can fluctuate**
32-bit tower console by NEC, resembles a PC. Released in Japan only, had software support until 1998. Only a few action titles. Apparently, it also had quite a bit of hentai on it.
- LAST IMPERIAL PRINCE
- CHOUJIN HEIKI ZEROIGAR (SHMUP)
- ZENKI FX (FIGHTER)



PC-ENGINE
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£55 ($101)**
Classic piece of Japanese hardware from NEC which features many excellent arcade ports and a few exclusives. The CoreGrafx system is basically a PC-Engine with AV output.



PC-ENGINE GT
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70+ ($129+)**
Portable handheld version of the Japanese PC-Engine that played all Japanese Hu-Cards.



TURBO GRAFX-16
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
American version of the PC-Engine. It has territory lockout, so the two system's Hu-Cards are not mutually compatible.



TURBO EXPRESS
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92) (massive fluctuations)**
Portable handheld version of the American Turbo Grafx-16.
- BONK/PC KID SERIES
- BLOODY WOLF
- NINJA SPIRIT



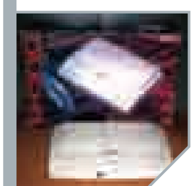
SUPER GRAFX
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147) (prices can fluctuate)**
Meant to be the successor to the original PC-Engine, but sadly failed due to lack of games. It is backwards compatible, but only had 6 games specifically released for it.
- ALDYNES
- DARIUS PLUS
- GHOULS AND GHOSTS



PCE CD-ROM/ TURBO GRAFX CD
» YEAR **1988**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
CD-ROM add-on for the PCE and TG16, released in 1988 and 1989. It has no region lockout.



PCE DUO/TURBO DUO
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£120 ($221)**
System that combines the PCE/TG16 with its CD add-on. Released in both Japan and America in 1991 and 1992. The CD games still have no region lockout.



DUO-R
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Stripped down white version of the PCE Duo, without headphone port. Later in 1994 a Duo-RX version was released, slightly blue in colour and came with a 6 button control pad.
- DRACULA X
- SHUBIBINMAN 3
- LORDS OF THUNDER

NINTENDO



FAMICOM
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£60 ($111)**
Nintendo's first foray into the home console market, with over a 1000 games to choose from!



FAMICOM AV
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
A cheaper remodelled version of the Famicom, now with AV output.



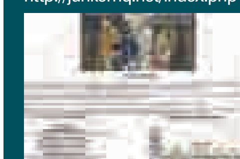
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£70 ($129)**
Nintendo's attempt to bring cheap rewritable disk-based gaming to the masses. Be warned,

RETRO GAMING SITES

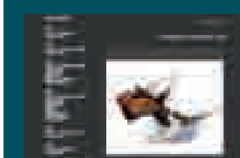
VIDEO GAME ADS
We've mentioned this site before, but every month we keep finding more great ads. While there are plenty of adverts for the current generation of consoles, it's worth digging around on the website as there's some real gold to be found. http://gameads.gamepressure.com/



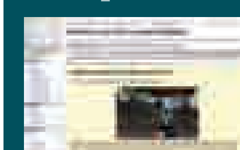
JUNKER HQ
Fans of Hideo Kojima would do well to check out the excellent Junker HQ. It's a shrine to Kojima's back catalogue, but has everything from *Metal Gear* to *Policenauts*; there's no preachy, fan adulation here. All you get is in-depth features and some stunning art. http://junkerhq.net/index.php



THE ARTWORK OF PANZER DRAGOON
The *Panzer Dragoon* series is famous for its Moebius-styled imagery so here's a website full of art from the franchise. A website every *Panzer Dragoon* fan should bookmark. /www.moonapples.com/lagi/content.htm



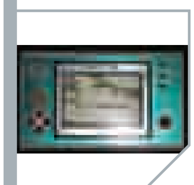
GAME INNOVATION DATABASE
Want to know what was the first game to use 'bullet time'? Well, the answer's here. If only videogames was a subject at our pub quiz. www.gameinnovation.org/index.php/Welcome_to_the_Game_Innovation_Database%21



the drive belts break very easily.



SHARP FAMICOM TWIN
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Combined Famicom and Disk System, by Sharp.
- OTOCKY
- NAZO NO MURASAMEJOU
- PATLABOR



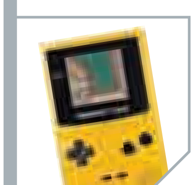
GAME&WATCH
» YEAR **1980-1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£1+ ($2+)**
Series of handheld LCD games that were created by the legendary Gunpei Yoko.



GAME BOY B/W
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£5 ($9)**
Nintendo's original handheld portable, with interchangeable cartridges. Despite it's age, and monochrome display, there are many excellent classic GB games.



GAME BOY POCKET
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£8 ($15)**
A smaller and more compact GB, with improved screen. A Japanese version with built-in light was released and sells for a much higher price.
- SUPER MARIO LAND
- TETRIS
- POKÉMON



GAME BOY COLOR
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£12 ($22)**
Colour-based version of the classic GB. Backwards compatible, but it also has several exclusive games that were rather special.
- METAL GEAR SOLID: GHOST BABEL
- RESIDENT EVIL GAIDEN
- HARVEST MOON 3



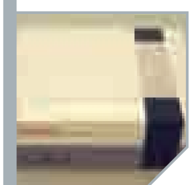
GAME BOY ADVANCE
» YEAR **2001**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46)**



N64
» YEAR **1996**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Nintendo's last cartridge based console, competitor to the PlayStation and Saturn. Has several highly sought after classics. Some games (like *Donkey Kong*) require the RAM expansion pack and wouldn't run without it.
- SUPER MARIO 64
- PILOTWINGS 64
- BLAST CORPS



N64 DD
» YEAR **1999**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
Another attempt by Nintendo to incorporate disc media with one of their cartridge-based consoles. Expensive and very few games were released.
- F-ZERO EXPANSION KIT
- MARIO ARTIST SERIES
- DOSHIN THE GIANT



NES (TOASTER)
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28)**
The Western version of the Famicom, popular the world over. Plenty of great Nintendo classics to choose from, and very cheap too.



NES (DOG BONE)
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50 ($92)**
Remodelled and improved version of the traditional NES. Region lockout was also removed, meaning all 72 pin based NES games work.
- METROID
- THE LEGEND OF ZELDA
- SUPER MARIO BROS. 3



SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)
» YEAR **1990**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
Nintendo's successor to the NES, and one of their most popular machines. A retro staple with a fantastic selection of games.



SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JPN)
» YEAR **1997**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+)**
Cheaper and redesigned SNES.
- SUPER METROID
- SECRET OF MANA
- SUPER MARIO WORLD



VIRTUAL BOY
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80 ($147)**
Nintendo's failed attempt at a pseudo Virtual Reality games system. Quite a novelty as there is nothing else like it. Be warned though, as many gamers have complained that the machine gives them headaches – never a good thing.
- INSMOUSE NO YAKATA (HP LOVECRAFT INSPIRED FPS)
- WARIO LAND
- RED ALARM

PHILIPS



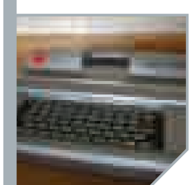
CD-I 205/210/220
» YEAR **from1992**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20+ ($37+)**
Unique system by Philips.The 200 series consists of front loading systems, with each one having slightly different specifications.



CD-I 450/500
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55) (more with DVC)**
Consolised version of previous models, with the latter 500 series featuring an integrated DVC.
- BURN CYCLE
- HOTEL MARIO



VIDEOPAC G7000
» YEAR **1978**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**
Popular across the world (especially Brazil and Holland) and known also as the 'Odyssey 2'.



VIDEOPAC G7400
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**
A successor to the G7000, that was backwards compatible.
- QUEST FOR RINGS
- PICKAXE PETE
- MUNCHKIN

SEGA



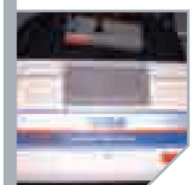
32X
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65) (with leads)**
Failed Mega Drive add-on, designed to enhance it's capabilities.
- KNUCKLES CHAOTIX
- KOLIBRI
- DARXIDE



DREAMCAST
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£25 ($46) depending on extras**
Sega's final hardware release. No gamer should be without it. Amazing official roster of games, plus it can emulate older systems.
- SHENMUE
- CRAZY TAXI
- REZ



GAME GEAR
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£15 ($28) more with extras**
Handheld by Sega, designed to compete against the Game Boy. Low battery life, but effectively a portable Master System. Could also be used as a TV (as shown here).
- SHINOBI 2
- COLUMNS
- TV TUNER



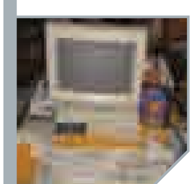
SG-1000 (PLUS THE MARK II AND III)
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20-£50 ($37 - $$92)**
Sega's first console, and a piece of history! The Mark III model would later be redesigned to become the Master System. Like the Japanese Famicom, it's much nicer than the UK version.



SC-3000
» YEAR **1983**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £50 ($92)**
Computer equivalent of the SG-1000, also by Sega. Was popular in Australia and other ex-colonies. Mutually compatible with the SG-1000 as well.



MASTER SYSTEM I/II
» YEAR **1985**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) with leads etc.**
Popular Sega 8-bit console, which competed against the NES. Adapted from previous systems.
- PHANTASY STAR
- WONDER BOY 3: DRAGON'S TRAP
- CALIFORNIA GAMES



AMSTRAD MEGA PC
» YEAR **1993**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18) (according to eBay)**
A strange hybrid between an Amstrad PC and a Mega Drive. A nice collectable oddity, though according to past eBay auctions, not a high seller.



TERADRIVE
» YEAR **1991**
» » RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £100 ($184)**
Another Mega Drive computer

hybrid. Released earlier than the Amstrad hybrid, these systems have no connection. Due to being exclusive to Japan, they are seldom seen in the wild. Likely to be very expensive if you are able to find one.



MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II
» YEAR **1989+**
» RARITY
» » PRICE **£10 ($18) depending on model**
The big daddy, Sega's most successful console and a retro classic.

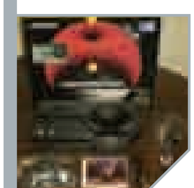


GENESIS 3
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Developed by Majesco. This third, cut-down model is rarer and has some compatibility issues. USA only.



NOMAD
» YEAR **1995**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184)**
Handheld Mega Drive. Pricey, low battery life and some compatibility problems.

- RANGER-X
- THUNDER FORCE IV
- COMIX ZONE



MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100+ ($184+) depending on system**
CDX/Xeye
A series of different hybrid MD and MCD systems, released in the three main territories.



MEGA CD (SCD) I/II
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£50+ ($92+) depending on system**
Sega's CD add-on for the Mega Drive. Despite heavy criticism, has many excellent games.

- POPFUL MAIL
- SNATCHER
- SONIC CD



PICO
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37) (more with games)**
Toy computer released for young children. The games come in nice storybook style boxes.

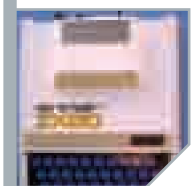
- SONIC'S GAMEWORLD
- ECCO JR. AND THE GREAT OCEAN HUNT
- THE LION KING: ADVENTURES AT PRIDE ROCK



SATURN
» YEAR **1994**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£30 ($55)**
Sega's competition against the PlayStation and N64. A real 2D powerhouse, that despite an amazing catalogue of games never really took off.

- SATURN BOMBERMAN
- GUARDIAN HEROES
- DRAGON FORCE

SINCLAIR



ZX-80
» YEAR **1980**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£200 ($368) Apparently if boxed and mint**
Very early British home computer from Sinclair. Low capability meant limited gaming possibilities. Now extremely hard to get hold of.



ZX-81
» YEAR **1981**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) if mint**
Improved home computer from Sinclair, with black and white ASCII graphics. Not as hard to source as a ZX-80, but still commands a respectable price.

- 3D MONSTER MAZE
- MAZOGS
-SABOTAGE



ZX SPECTRUM 48K
» YEAR **1982**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£10 ($18)**



ZX SPECTRUM 128K
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**



ZX SPECTRUM
» YEAR **1984**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



ZX SPECTRUM +2
» YEAR **1986**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**



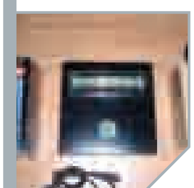
ZX SPECTRUM +3
» YEAR **1987**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£40 ($74)**
The British classic loved by many. A vast improvement over previous Sinclair computers, it was normally compared against the C64 and Amstrad home computers, which in turn caused many playground arguments over who had the better machine.

- HEAD OVER HEELS
- 3D DEATHCHASE
- SKOOL DAZE

SNK



NEOGEO AES
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£150+ ($276+)**
High powered home system by SNK. Features many high quality arcade games. Sadly, many titles are now ridiculously expensive to purchase.



NEOGEO MVS
» YEAR **1989**
» RARITY
» PRICE **Approx £70 ($129) (multi-slot systems cost more)**
High powered arcade system by SNK, which many people prefer over the home based AES due to lower pricing of games. (The majority of NeoGeo titles appeared on both systems, or alternatively can be converted).

- METAL SLUG
- KING OF FIGHTERS 96
- WAKU WAKU 7

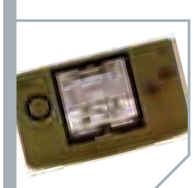


NEOGEO CD
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£100 ($184) varies**



NEOGEO CDZ
» YEAR **1991**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£80+ ($147+)**
CD-based NeoGeo systems, an attempt by SNK to lower the cost of NeoGeo games. The CDZ is cheaper and has slightly improved loading times. Most CD titles are ports from the AES/MVS.

- VIEWPOINT
- AGGRESSORS OF DARK COMBAT
- SAMURAI SHOWDOWN RPG



NEOGEO POCKET (B/W)
» YEAR **1998**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£20 ($37)**



NEOGEO POCKET COLOR
» YEAR **1999**
» RARITY
» PRICE **£35 ($65)**
Handheld NeoGeo systems by SNK, that sadly failed to compete with the Game Boy, despite featuring some great games. Still a wonderful little system though. Be sure to buy the later colour screen model.

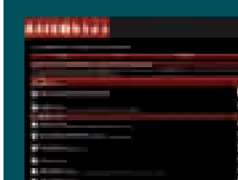
- FASELEI!
- CARD FIGHTERS (CAPCOM/SNK)
- MATCH OF THE MILLENNIUM (CAP VS SNK)

RETRO GAMING SITES

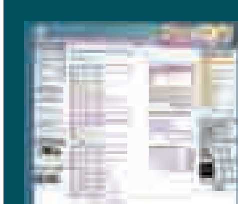
THE MEAN MACHINES ARCHIVE
If you were interested in last issue's Mean Machines retrospective, then head on over to Damien McFerran's wonderful website. Filled with fantastic interviews with key staff members, including Julian Rignall, Richard Leadbetter and Gary Harrod it's a real labour of love that's a joy to read through. Oh and while you're there, check out the deleted cuts that didn't make our feature.



ASSEMBLER
It may have been reduced to just a forum now, but don't be fooled, as ASSEMbler remains one of the most interesting retro forums anywhere on the Internet. Fully dedicated to the discovery and preservation of prototype machines and games, there's always something fascinating to discover in ASSEMbler's many threads. Just don't mention *Sonic X-treme* there. www.assemblergames.com



SHINING FORCE CENTRAL
If this month's *Phantasy Star* feature leaves you hungry for RPG goodness from Sega then visit Marisa Nielsen's homage to all things *Shining Force*. Covering the entire series it's one of the most comprehensive sites we've visited and is sure to please0. www.shiningforcecentral.com



Special thanks to **lofi-gaming-org.uk** who supplied several of our screenshots

THE RETRO FORUM

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – WWW.RETROGAMER.NET



CONTACT US

Snail Mail
Retro Gamer
Imagine Publishing
Richmond House
33 Richmond Hill
Bournemouth
Dorset
BH2 6EZ

Email
retrogamer@
imagine-publishing.co.uk

STAR LETTER!

ROBOTRON RULES

Dear Darran,

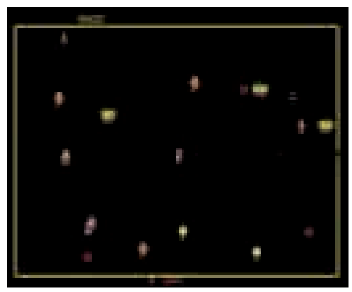
I've been a gamer for many years – way back when I got my first Atari 2600. Having read (and enjoyed) your Desert Island Disks articles, I noticed that most people had chosen *Robotron: 2084*, a game, which I have heard of but never played.

I thought well, so many gaming legends can't be wrong so I decided to give it a go – and wow, what a game! One of the most intense shooters I've ever played and it's so addictive!

I realise now that I'd made the cardinal sin of gaming – judging a game by just its graphics. Just goes to show, no matter how long you've been playing games, there are still new gems out there to be discovered everyday.

Yours sincerely,
David Marsden,
Lancashire

So glad you're enjoying Robotron *David. It really is an amazing little title and one that we never get bored of playing. Not only have you discovered one of the best games ever created (in our humble opinion of course) but you've also been big enough to own up to something that so many gamers suffer from. Stand up, be proud and help yourself to a T-shirt and plug 'n play set.*



PORN PAINS

Dear Retro Gamer,

First of all I think you have a great magazine, but why does it have to have porn ads in the back? I started to read Retro Gamer in order to read about all the games I missed in the Eighties and Nineties because I was too young. But I have a brother who is quite a lot younger than myself, and I can't leave him alone with the magazine because of all the porn that's in it. I would rather pay more for the magazine then have porn ads in it.

I'm considering stopping buying the magazine because of all the porn ads.

Cheers, Martin

We can appreciate your concerns Martin, but unfortunately it's out of our hands. We have no control over the advertising content that appears in the mag and we hate to see these ads in the magazine as much as you do. While we can appreciate the situation with your younger brother, Retro Gamer isn't actually aimed at the very young. The majority of our readership are in their mid-twenties to late-forties, so advertising are simply catering ads to the people that usually read the magazine. Rather than not buy the magazine anymore why not simply stick the offending classified pages together so your brother can't read them? (and yes, we know what that would look like so no sniggering please).



EVERY MONTH ONE lucky reader will receive an extremely trendy Retro Gamer T-Shirt (thankfully, not one worn by Darran) and a Sega Mega Drive Plug 'N Play pack. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls; failing that, something funny with swear words in it will go down just as well…

SPINELESS

Dear Retro Gamer,

What's happening with the spine printing? Issue 30 has been printed with the same spine as Issue 29 and looks stupid next to the rest of the issues. What's going on fellas? I demand answers.

Steve

You're not the first person to notice the errant spine, so we'll give you three answers to choose from, one of which is true. A) Elves snuck into the office at the dead of night and bored with constantly mending shoes decided to sabotage our spine. B) The entire Retro Gamer team went on a massive drinks binge and forgot what issue they were working on. C) It was an honest mistake.

DURELL DAMNATION

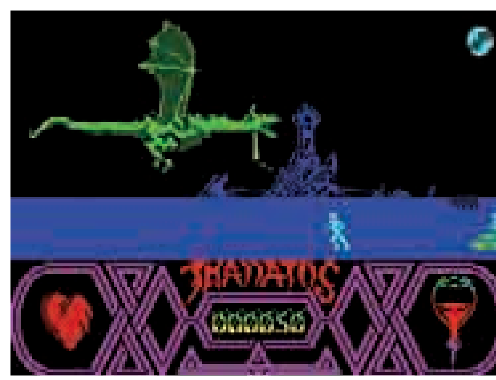
Dear Retro Gamer,

I've just picked up you mag, the "Crash" look drew me to it, and even with the slightly steep price tag it's well worth it. My co-workers and I have been nosing through it all day and really enjoyed it. However, I did notice one glaring issue within the magazine… Where on earth are all the Durell Games? I spent many an hour playing the likes of *Lotus Esprit* (the Durell one), *Scuba Dive, Saboteur* and *Critical Mass.* How could you miss all these classics?

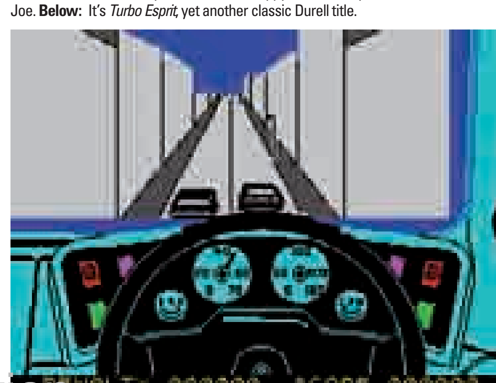
One memory that was brought back to me though was *Stunt Car Racer* – my brother and I used to don a BMX helmet and hit each other round the head with a cricket bat if one of us fell off the side of the track.

Cheers Joe

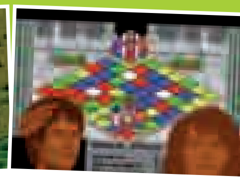
Sorry to hear that you're not happy with the Durell coverage, but an extensive feature

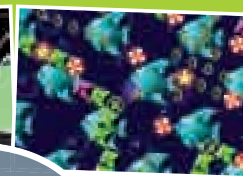


» **Above:** We like to keep all our readers happy, so here's a pic of *Thanatos* Joe. **Below:** It's *Turbo Esprit*, yet another classic Durell title.









appeared way back in Issue 11, so we've be reluctant to re-cover the same ground. Still, there's no reason why we can't do a 'Making Of' feature in a future issue. Keep your eyes peeled.

WHERE'S THE RUM?

Hi RG,

I was reading your article on *Herzog Zwei* in Issue 28 (great mag by the way) and I just wanted to mention a similar title. If you happen to own *Future Cop LAPD* (an otherwise unspectacular PSX title) you may be pleased to learn that it features a two-player sub game that's remarkably similar to *Herzog Zwei*. I thought you guys might be interested as my brother and myself spent more time with this than the actual main game! Anyway, it's really got my interested in returning to *Herzog Zwei* now, so I'm off to find the ROM.

Cheers, Aaron Holland

Thanks for the heads up on Future Cop*; we'll look into that. On the other hand, we've lost countless hours in the office recently playing* Herzog Zwei*, so maybe we're better off leaving it for a while… Oh, and with regards to you going off to look for illegal games, we'll simply assume you meant to write RUM.*





» *Herzog Zwei* fans would do well to check out *Future Cop LAPD*'s bonus game. They're remarkably similar.

EVERY MONTH, RETRO GAMER WILL BE ASKING A QUESTION ON THE FORUM AND PRINTING THE BEST REPLIES. THIS MONTH WE ASKED: WHAT WAS YOUR FAVOURITE GAMING RELATED CHRISTMAS PRESENT?

FROM THE FORUM

ID: SirClive

I got *Astro Wars* for Christmas in 1981 or 82. It was like having an arcade in my bedroom! I must have played it for days on end. My brother ended up swapping it for a set of Disney encyclopaedias a year later though. I think he is adopted!

ID: bolda

A NES with *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, *Gradius* and *Ikari Warriors*… kept me going well into Boxing Day!

ID: Sureshot

It's a toss-up between getting my BBC Master many moons ago and my Mega Drive in '92.

For this exercise, I'll go with the Mega Drive as the BBC was a bit of a new experience for me and I was very young, but I was really gnashing at the bit for a console prior to the Christmas when I got my MD. It was made even better because I initially thought I was getting a Master System, but my Brother had managed to convince my parents to get a MD instead. Cue spending the whole day taking turns at *Sonic* while noshing all the nice food that Santa had brought… Good times!

ID: P-Head

When I was nine or ten I got an Amiga 500 for Christmas, with the *Astra Pack* bundle. *Datastorm*, *Shufflepuck Cafe*, *Tower Of Babel*, *Powerplay*… awesome. I spent the whole day playing *Grand Monster Slam*.

ID: MattC

That would have to be the Amstrad CPC464 I got on Christmas Day 1986. My mum used to like to set up 'treasure hunts' in which I had to solve clues in order to find the 'big present' and this year was no different. However, this year the clues came with the Amsoft tapes and somehow (even though I was seven and had never seen computer software before) I figured out what they were about halfway through. That was when I started getting seriously excited. The CPC still takes the top spot as the most memorable present I've ever received and I even remember the first game I played – the Amsoft *Fruit Machine* – which was already loaded into the computer when I first laid eyes on it.

ID: Utini

My favourite Christmas was 1989 – the one year where my present wasn't a kick in the head with an iron boot.

ID: Smurph

Mine was *FFVII* on the PSone. I was sick (bad case of Glandular fever) and my wife needed to do a lot of work for her last year of uni, so to get me out of her hair she gave me the game a month early. I stayed in bed for nearly two months playing it, well through Christmas. Best illness ever! Close second, my parents bought me a Master System with *Action Fighter*. Bless 'em.

ID: GetDexter

Back in 1987 my parents secretly arranged for Mathew Smith to knock on the door at dinnertime, dressed as Santa. He came in and ate Christmas dinner with us before giving me a copy of *Miner Willy Meets The Taxman*, with orders to never distribute it or show it to anyone in my life. We then played on my Amstrad together and had a two-player session on *Sultan's Maze*. That was the best Christmas gaming present ever. I think… I mean… it was a long time ago, so the above may not be completely factually accurate.

ID: Kai

On Christmas 1990 I got the ultimate gaming machine; I was so keen on playing our neighbour and my friends: the Amiga 500 – my first own home computer! Complete with monitor, two silver-blue competition pro joysticks, a 9-dot matrix printer and a computer table. It was so great, I just couldn't believe it! Just like the two games I got with it: *Conqueror* (a cheap *Virus* clone) and *Snow Strike* (a cheesy action flight sim).

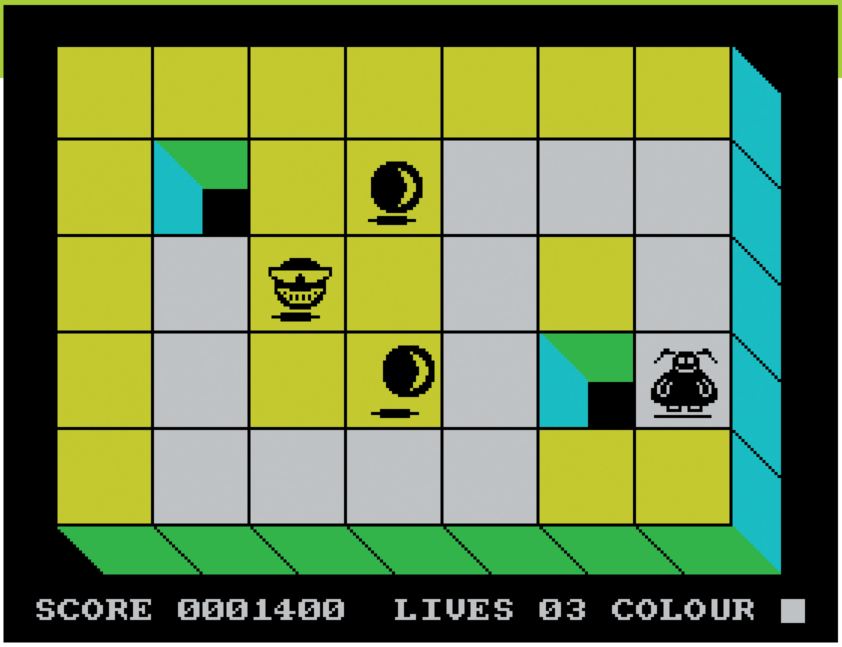
ID: revgiblet

The Christmas after I got my C64 I received *Commando*, *Ghosts 'N Goblins* and *Skyfox*. And my parents let me bring the C64 down from my room (where it was hooked up to a black and white TV) to play on the colour TV downstairs. I couldn't jump past the very first gravestone of *Ghosts 'N Goblins* because the up and right on my joystick wasn't working, but I still had an hour of fun running around in that first section killing zombies and avoiding that stupid firebomb power up.

ID: The Duke

A Master System packaged with *Alex Kidd In Miracle World*, along with some other terrible games, whose names escape me now. That was a great present. Those days of gaming are well gone nowadays – for shame! I remember sitting around with my two sisters taking it in turns to play through all of Alex's three lives (along with those accrued along the way). It would take me about five hours to lose my precious lives, my older sister one or two and my poor little sister about ten minutes. Still fair's fair. When you'd lost your lives you passed the controller. There were some tears that Christmas.

THE RETRO FORUM



» A picture of *Pippo* to help cheer up a sad Christian Whittle. Don't worry, the cover disks will return. Someday…

PIPPO PASSION

Dear Retro Gamer,

I would like to say well done for such a fantastic magazine. I have been collecting Retro Gamer since 2004, but I'm still disappointed that you're no longer doing the cover discs, as me and my friends used to spend many hours going over them on my laptop PC.

I also loved the free Your Sinclair magazine that was given away for free and was wondering if we'd see something similar again in the future as it was a very enjoyable read. Back in the day I was a huge Sinclair ZX Spectrum fanatic and I had hundreds of games and every copy of Your Sinclair, so you can imagine how much I liked that particular freebie.

Before I go, I'd just like to tell you about my two favourite Spectrum games, *Bruce Lee* and *Pippo*. I thought the Spectrum version of *Bruce Lee* was a lot better to look at and play than the Commodore 64 version and was somewhat horrified when you featured that very version in a recent issue.

To make up for this grave error, is there anyway that you could perhaps cover *Pippo* in the near future.

Keep up the great work,
Christian Whittle

Glad you're enjoying the magazine Christian. While the cover disks no longer feature on the magazine we haven't ruled them out entirely. It's just that we want to be able to offer the sort of goodies that you can't get anywhere else. Another issue now, is that many companies are reluctant to let us have access to their back catalogues, as the likes of Xbox Live Arcade and Nintendo's new download service would be more profitable. As for Pippo*, how's the screenshot above for the moment?*

VARIETY SHOWS

Dear Retro Gamer,

I always enjoy the magazine, but after reading Issue 30, I thought I'd write in to offer you all a special well done. The *It Came From The Desert* feature was a real joy to read. How refreshing to find something so daring and stylistic in a gaming magazine. I showed it to some of my friends who read more mainstream magazines and they were astonished to find a magazine offering such variety. I have done my best to steer them in your direction. Honestly, I don't know how people can stand to read magazines droning on and on about how good the graphics are in the latest spat-out franchise month after month. Anyway that's enough ranting. Could you tell me who it was written by and if there's anything else on the way?

Kind Regards, Tim

We enjoyed the piece ourselves, so we appreciate your thanks Tim. The article in question was written by Spanner, who's featured in most past issues of the magazine (he's taking a well-earned rest this month) but will be back in issue 33 with a Making of the rather excellent Earthworm Jim. As for your comments on mainstream mags, we couldn't possible comment.

CONTACT US

Snail Mail: Retro Gamer, Imagine Publishing, Richmond House, 33 Richmond Hill, Bournemouth, Dorset BH2 6EZ **Email:** retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

EXCLUSIVE REPORT!

GAME ON



SPECIAL GONZO REPORT:

CLASSIC GAMING IN LONDON



A HUNTER-ESQUE SCIENTIFIC ADVENTURE OF GREAT HISTORICAL IMPORTANCE

London's Science Museum is hosting the returning Game On exhibition, which charts the history of gaming as a medium. Kicking things off they invited the press to attend a special preview on 20 October, but due to pressing agendas Retro Gamer couldn't attend. This left us needing to drum up our own, pure, gonzo journalism, by riding the rails on a public day and brushing shoulders with the gaming masses. The impromptu nature of this sudden conclusion means that the month's home-brew news is absent in favour of a special show report.

The morning of Friday, 3 November, had an air of desperation as events from the previous evening were forced away from the sub-conscious in preparation for a pre-dawn raid on Bournemouth station. But a colleague was late, with time running out; would he make it and how long could we maintain? He arrived and several hours of hurtling along in a sweaty metal snake, above and below ground, finally brought us to our destination – four of Britannia's finest reporters, at one of Britannia's finest scientific establishments. The goal was simple: attain caffeine saturation, play lots and lots of games, then write about it.

We reached the front desk, screamed out our press affiliation ranks, and were then admitted through a large door into a secluded section of the museum's second floor. Everyone entering that glorious inner sanctum is instantly smothered by a galactic spasm of intense lights and sounds – emotional cues invigorating memories of a misspent youth in seedy arcades and gaming establishments. And yet, it was different. It was sanitised, clean, very pleasant. A heady combination of inviting nostalgia and informative ludology.

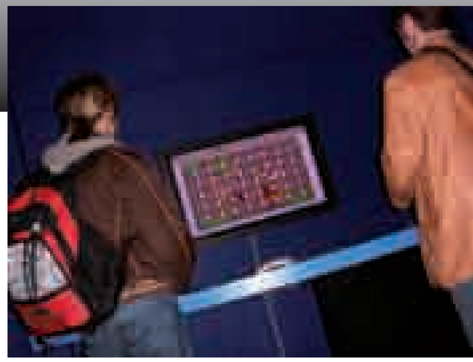
All around people were playing games and smiling, kids becoming acquainted with classics their youth had forced them to miss out on. But these were no mere dwarven midgets forced into varieties of child-like garb – no, these were real children, with real smiles – they were playing antiquated games, of greater years than them, and they were loving every second of it. Incredible. Two pre-school girls fought in a tense match of *Fighting Street* while a retired grandmother was entranced



» Sir David Attenborough was alleged to have said at the show, "Here we see a big kid and a little kid in their native habitat, surrounded by games."



» Along with the usual expected games and systems, there were some interesting curios.



» Surely *Saturn Bomberman* is the greatest multiplayer game ever? Notice how the cameraman has gone week at the knees just seeing it.



» Framed and on display were early issues of several major magazines, like Crash, Famitsu, and Electronic Gaming Monthly. Unfortunately none could be read.

by the kaleidoscopic visuals from *Discs Of Tron* – only few working cabs exist, yet she was score-hustling all-comers. Our intrepid, muscular, and unshaven band of four world-weary hacks felt oddly out of place amidst all the family fun being had. The stench of the über-geek was absent from the place, making it wonderfully accessible for everyone. It proved that the history of games was not a passing phase, it was something to revel in and enjoy regardless of age.

From the start we found ourselves instantly drawn to a massive overhead screen displaying *Pong*. Black and white, back and forth, the first to 10 points – shockingly simple, and yet like many other people we were unable to withdraw. *Donkey Kong* and *Space War* beckoned like synthetic sirens of a binary age, but until match point was reached and passed there could be no turning away. The lure of even the simplest games is a testament to the ability of classic titles to tap into everyone's competitive spirit.

Other great highlights were the (sadly unplayable) communist *Poly Play* arcade cabinet from East Germany, by Polytechnik (which should warm the hearts of every Bolshevik reader). There were also two Pachinko machines, also unfortunately display only. Meanwhile, promoting the indie aesthetic and scene, was *Warning Forever* by Hikoza T Ohkubo, plus a selection of Yaroze games. Multiplayer titles were heavily emphasised – and rightly so. The one we spent most time on was *Saturn Bomberman*, rigged for up to six players. Could there be a more pure and refined multiplayer game than this? The atmosphere was jovial, with strangers queuing up to shove explosives into the gaping maw of the next man, proving, without doubt, that all gamers are born equal in the eyes of Hudson's chubby bomb-spewing mascot. In total there were more than 120 games available to freely play – nearly too many to sample in one day, and certainly far too many to mention.

Many things were displayed besides playable games. There were fact panels to read and also rare items on display. Some of the more interesting were a collection of Game Freak magazines (an early Eighties fanzine by Satoshi Tajiri the creator of *Pokémon*). To see the origins of the world's biggest franchises and the man responsible for it, was amazing, and in our mind cemented the academic respectability of the event. Each display emanated a historical aura.

There was also original hand-drawn artwork – imagery from games like *Dragon's Lair* and *Tomb Raider*. Suddenly I was consumed by flashbacks of the first Game On event, some five or six years ago. I had taken the day off school, lying to the headmaster about attending some kind of ostentatious art exhibit which would culturally expand the mind: something about artistic nude photography. He bought it, and I spent the day playing games. It was amazing, especially since it featured exquisite original illustrations by Yoshitaka Amano. These were missing from this return, or at least not in plain view, as were several other interesting items from the first showing. Where was the *Vector*-based *Battlezone* – replaced perhaps by *Tekki* on the Xbox? In defence though, it must be said there were plenty of new additions, which more than made up for any curious omissions.

With these disappointments, it's also only fair to mention certain other slight negatives. With its travels around the world, the equipment has taken a hammering. Most noticeably, several control schemes have started to break down and some machines have become display only. With *Warlords* on the Atari 2600, only one of the four paddles worked effectively. While with *Garou: Mark Of The Wolves* on Neo Geo MVS, only the strong punch button worked for player two. There were also a couple of curious game choices which few seemed to be interested in.

We left feeling drained and yet frenzied with excitement, bringing on a strange paralysis while riding the great iron snake back to Bournemouth, whereby the body is unable to move but the mind is ablaze with frenetic thoughts and intense reflection. The greatest concern about Game On is that it moves around, and after 25 February, 2007, will move somewhere else. Regardless of whatever imperfections can be raised, this event does enough, more than enough in fact, to instantly and without question warrant the journey to London. Tell the boss you're taking time off work to culturally expand your mind, and make sure you experience it.

Game On runs until 25 February 2007. Tickets available via 0870 906 3890 and www.sciencemuseum.org.uk/gameon, costing £8.50 for adults and £6.50 for concessions. Discounted family, group and combination tickets available. The Science Museum is open everyday 10am-6pm, and the nearest tube is South Kensington. Additional photography supplied by (c)Science Museum/Antony Jones.



» A selection of Game Freak fanzine magazines, by the original creator of *Pokémon*. Disappointingly, it wasn't possible to leaf through any of them.



» Here we see the Poly Play cabinet on display, and inset, is a photo of the *Deer Hunting* game (Hirschjagd) available on it, played via MAME.

RETRO SCENE

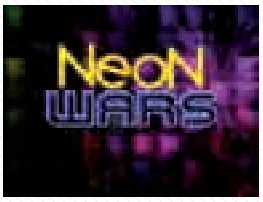
YOU HAVE TO LOVE INDIE DEVELOPERS AND THE HOMEBREW GAMES THEY CREATE. THIS MONTH SOMETHING A LITTLE DIFFERENT: TYPING OF Ys AND NEON WARS DELUXE

retro GAMER SIZZLER

NEON WARS DELUXE

AN INJECTION OF NEON MADNESS INTO THE BRAIN

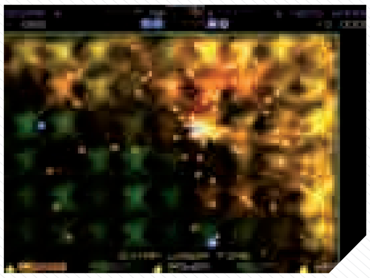
- » **FORMAT:** WINDOWS PC
- » **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** RICHARD PHIPPS & MICHAEL P WELCH
- » **PUBLISHED BY:** BLITWISE PRODUCTIONS LLC
- » **AVAILABLE FROM:** WWW.BLITWISE.COM
- » **PRICE:** $19.99
- » **REVIEWED BY:** JOHN SZCZEPANIAK



With the massive popularity of *Geometry Wars: Retro Evolved,* a modern neon-scorched take on the *Robotron* formula, it was inevitable that games would try to emulate some of its luminescent style. Ironically, titles which copied the gameplay had lawsuits slapped on them, even though *Geometry Wars* itself effectively "borrowed" from Eugene Jarvis' classic. *Neon Wars Deluxe* has recreated the same eye-melting visual quality, of pure light in liquid form dancing seductively on screens, but the gameplay is something distinctly different. Make no mistake, this isn't a title which is attempting to cash in on another's success. No, this dances to its own tune and does something fresh, new, specifically formed to suit the mouse-click generation of office-working gamers.

Unlike true *Geometry Wars* clones, which demand proper dual analogue joysticks, *Neon Wars* requires only the movement of a mouse – with not even a single button needing to be pressed (apart from for using power bombs). Your avatar will automatically fire on the nearest enemy, and keep firing until they're dead. While this may sound as if it would make the game too easy, it actually makes for a brilliantly inventive new style of playing, require precise movements and keen thinking. Easy it certainly is not!

The action is intense and, without the need to aim or even think about firing, the emphasis is on careful control – it's a brilliant new dynamic which changes the way you think about the game, and it's a wonder the idea isn't used more frequently. Like an adept surgeon with a scalpel, you need to carefully navigate between lesser enemies and seek out the bigger foes – there's also special power bomb type weapons for when you get into a tight jam. It can also be played with a single hand, casually, during brief office lulls, though there's also plenty of depth for long term players.



» The onscreen actions get very intense, but intuitive and precise mouse controls ensure you're always in control.



» Get as close to these triangular snakes as possible, and then watch as the homing fire slowly cuts them down.

With the high production values and intuitive controls it feels like a professional product, and so the slightly higher than expected price tag of $20 is reasonable and to be expected. The package is slick. Luckily though, there's a downloadable shareware versions, so you can try before you buy. We highly recommend that you give it a try.

RATING: 90%

TYPING OF Ys

FALCOM'S HERO ADOL RETURNS, TO TEACH TYPING!

- » **FORMAT:** WINDOWS PC
- » **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** FALCOM
- » **TRANSLATED BY:** NIGHTWOLVE
- » **AVAILABLE FROM:** HTTP://NICK.SERVEBLOG.NET/TRANSLATIONS/YSTT/
- » **PRICE:** FREE!
- » **REVIEWED BY:** JOHN SZCZEPANIAK



Do you remember Falcom? NEC stalwarts and all-round great RPG/Adventure creators: the creative visionaries behind the *Ys* and *Dragon Slayer* series, plus *Popful Mail* and several other great games. We love Falcom, and so any news on it is guaranteed to have coverage – especially since they've been quiet these past few years working on Japan-exclusive PC games. Informed by our friends at Insert Credit, we discovered that Nightwolve, Falcom fanatic and dedicated ROM hacker/translator, has finally released a standalone translation of Falcom's *Typing Of Ys.*

Based in the *Ys* universe, specifically *Ys II Complete* (not to be confused with *Ys II Eternal*), it's actually a hidden mini-game in *Zwei!!* on the PC (another japan-only RPG). In May 2005 Nightwolve started considering separating out the excellent mini-game and making it available online – but it would also need translating. After much work it was hacked, but the original text translator never came through. This left the project idle until August 2006, when translator Wrydwad picked up the reigns and helped complete the project. Additional hacks were made, and now it's available for free as a standalone game!

As a "typing tutor" the basic aim is to type the words and sentences that appear before time runs out. Much like Sega's *Typing Of The Dead*, except, all the text is related to the *Ys* universe somehow (item, character and enemy names, and so on), making it ideal for fans of the franchise (it's also much easier if you already know some of the things mentioned). Anyone who is fortunate enough to have played *Ys II Complete* will instantly recognise the majority of bosses, while the music is up to the excellent standards you'd expect of Falcom. It also contains several interesting elements, like enemies shooting "letter bubbles", with the corresponding key needing to be pressed in a hurry. Whether it improves your typing is unimportant, the hacking and translation work are superb, and for Falcom fans this is a must download. (Images courtesy of Nightwolve)

RATING: 82%



» Look! It's Adol, and Feena, standing among some ruins. This takes us way back to our days of binging on *Ys*.



» Anyone else remember this boss from *Ys II Complete*, or more specifically the giant tentacle that erupted from his gaping maw?

Remake of the Month

EVERY MONTH WE LOOK AT OUR FAVOURITE REMAKES; MIXING THINGS UP A LITTLE, WE CHECK OUT PIXEL SHIPS RETRO AND METROID PRIME 2D.

PIXELSHIPS RETRO

IT'S LIKE IT'S 1982 ALL OVER AGAIN – YUMMY



- » **FORMAT:** WINDOWS PC
- » **RELEASE DATE:** OUT NOW
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** KRIS ASICK
- » **PUBLISHEDED BY:** PIXELMUSEMENT
- » **DOWNLOADED FROM:** WWW.PIXELSHIPS.COM
- » **PRICE:** $12.95 USD
- » **REVIEWED BY:** JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

PixelShips Retro **is certainly a curious title, since it's actually a remake of a fairly recent game with the same name, sans the Retro moniker.** What the game's creator, Kris Asick, has done, rather ingeniously, is to take his original *PixelShips* and remake it in a more retro chunkovision style – in stark contrast to many of the remakes of old games which attempt to modernise the aesthetics, this makes everything older! As a result of these changes, the visuals and audio of *PixelShips Retro* are likely to greatly excite all fans of Commodore's 8-bit beige micro. You could be forgiven for thinking a SID had been kidnapped and bundled into Windows XP somehow.



» An acid geyser spews a whole lotta acid balls on a Class Y Planet. So make sure you have a fast ship and stay focused.

It should be stated though that there is a great understanding of retro chic in *PixelShips Retro*; any fool can limit their resolution, palette and audio capabilities, but the results of arbitrary limitations are seldom satisfactory. An extra-special cleverness is required to effectively mimic the style of classical games in a way that is pleasing, and with *PixelShip Retro* that is very much the case. The result is genuinely evocative of Eighties flair and style. This is without question the game's biggest strength. The gameplay meanwhile is a little bit *Defender*-esque, and a little bit *Pokémon* as you seek to destroy and thereby collect 160 different ships for later usage. The levels containing each ship are also randomly generated, which constantly helps to keep the experience fresh.

Ships can "flip" horizontally, flying either left or right, with the ultimate goal being to destroy various small satellites, thereby triggering the appearance of the boss. It's a clever dynamic, but one with some problems. The game, unfortunately, gets slightly repetitive after completing several stages, and is therefore best played in short goes. Furthermore, it's initially a little too slow, with the game only reaching a stride once more powerful ships have been acquired. But once it clicks, it's amazing.



» There are 160 different ships available to collect, each with their own traits, handling, weapons, and so on. Gotta collect 'em all.

While the lucky sods at Retro Game are spoiled with free and excellent shoot-'em-ups from the likes of the god-like Kenta Cho, we can understand that indie developers want to earn something for their hard work, and you honestly can't complain with the £6.50 price point. There's also a free demo which does an excellent job of conveying what the game is like, so you can try before you buy.

RATING **86%**

METROID PRIME 2D



- » **FORMAT:** WINDOWS PC
- » **RELEASE DATE:** SUMMER 2007
- » **DEVELOPED BY:** KELLAN STOVER AND TEAM
- » **AVAILABLE FROM:** WWW.MP2D.CO.UK
- » **REVIEWED BY:** JOHN SZCZEPANIAK

» Remember the burning cargo bay, with the giant alien arachnid monster? Yup, it's been remade in full 2D glory.

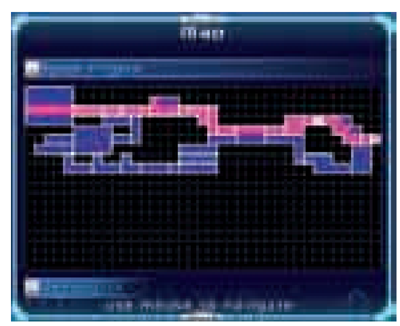
SAMUS HAS LOST HER Z AXIS

This isn't strictly a review, it's more of a preview of the recently released *Metroid Prime 2D* demo. Most retro fans will of course be familiar with the few documented attempts to change the perspective of popular games: one gentleman worked long and hard to recreate *Ocarina Of Time* in the same 2D style as *Link To The Past*, before the project mysteriously disappeared. Then there was the team working on a *Chrono Trigger* remake in 3D, until lawyers became involved and put a stop to things. This is the latest attempt, and so far it's looking damned impressive.



The currently available demo is set solely on the opening space station, and lasts until the Parasite Queen encounter. Very short, but enough to show that the team know what they're doing. Everything you expect has been incorporated, including morph ball, missiles, scanning beam (with entries for dozens of scan-able things – which is staggering), and, in a delightfully ingenious moment, which bodes well for the future, the team have even given Samus separate sprites for when she faces left or right, just like in *Super Metroid*! Throughout there are also plenty of subtle details, like sparks on a spinning elevator cog, and bugs to crush underfoot.

It's like revisiting an old friend after suffering from amnesia – it evokes past memories, and yet it's a fresh experience. It also shows surprisingly how well *Metroid Prime* works in the second dimension, and it makes us wish that companies weren't so eager to embrace 3D all the time. The only negatives are that it's too short, some of the animation isn't as fluid as we'd like, and the keyboard controls are dire. Hopefully they'll implement USB pad support, otherwise we'll be forced to use our JoyToKey utility again. Finally there is the concern that if Nintendo is aware of the project (and no doubt it probably is), it will unleash the hounds with orders to go straight for these hackers' balls. So if you're holding your breath for a completed version, you could well die of asphyxiation.



» The 2D map screen makes a joyous return. If only the demo was bigger!

RATING NA%

EMULATE THIS

EMULATING THE CD-I IS A COMPLICATED AND DIFFICULT PROCESS. LUCKILY, THERE IS ONLY ONE WORKING EMULATOR AVAILABLE, WHICH NARROWS THINGS DOWN A BIT.



STEP ONE Head over to www.cdiemu.org and under the "Get it! Downloads" section, select cdiemu-0.5.2.zip to download. It's only a limited trial version, but it is functional and will allow you to make a decision on if you want to purchase the full emulator. Extract all the files to a folder of your choice (we used C:\CDi). Now you need a BIOS ROM. Legally this can only be obtained from an actual CD-i unit (see step 2), though various BIOS images are available if you search online.



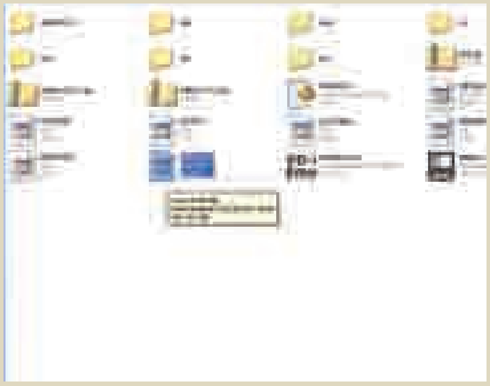
STEP 2 If you're going down the route of downloading the BIOS direct from a system, as opposed to searching online (we can't provide links for legal reasons), you need a CD-i system and a Null Modem Cable. The CD-i Null-Modem cable is easy to build on the cheap for the technically savvy (instructions on the emu site, under "Main CD-i Link", in cdilink-0.5.2.zip) . For those not wanting to make one, a cable can be bought from the CD-i Store (check www.blackmoonproject.co.uk under Links).



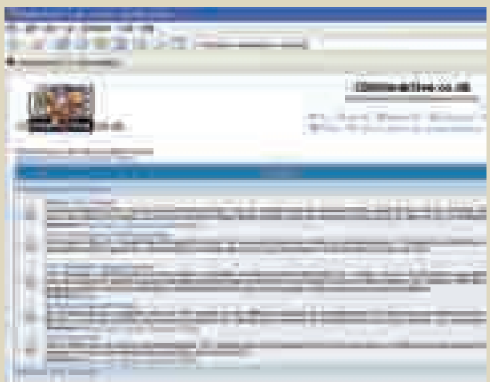
STEP 3 Connect your chosen CD-i system to your PC using the Null Modem Cable. Download the CD-i Link 0.5.2 program from www.icdia.co.uk under the 'PC/Windows Downloads' section subheading 'CD-i communication tools'. UNZIP the CD-i Link to any directory, preferably one easy to access through MS-DOS/Command Prompt. Open MS-DOS/Command Prompt and direct it towards the CD-i Link directory. Use the simple command 'CD C:\cdilink' for example if it was installed directly to Drive C. Then execute the CD-i Link program for a list of available options with the 'cdilink.exe' command.



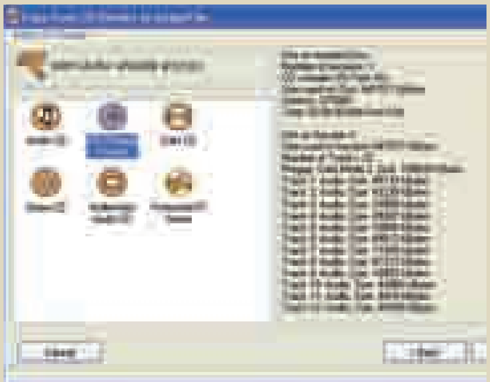
STEP 4 Type the command 'cdilink -roms' to begin the upload; you will need to reboot the CD-i player to begin this process. CD-i Link uses a 'stub' protocol which in some cases you need to use an actual CD-i disk containing the cdi_stub to initiate this program. The CD-i Stub Disk is available from The ICDIA as an ISO. The players ROM/BIOS can take several minutes to upload the small 512KB file so be patient and CD-i Link will inform you when the procedure has finished.



STEP 5 Once CD-i Link has finished the upload you should be left with the 512KB ROM/BIOS file called 'cdixxxx.rom' the 'x' replaced by your player specific information for identification purposes. If you have a Digital Video Cartridge installed then you'll also find CD-i Link has downloaded a second 256KB file identified as 'gmpega2.rom' or a similar name. This file can be ignored and has no function. Now simply move the CD-i ROM/BIOS file to CD-i Emulators 'rom' folder and then once opened the emulator should recognise the file automatically.



STEP 6 The above presumes the CD-i Null-Modem Cable is already attached to Port 2 of the CD-i Player and Serial connection on your PC. Few CD-i players lacking a second port require the CD-i Splitter Cable which will provide a secondary port for the CD-i Null-Modem Cable connection. Players coming under this category include the consolised 450/550 series. Modern PC-Tech is phasing out the serial connection, but you can buy 'USB to RS232 Cable' which substitutes the lack of serial capability through the common USB port! Of course the multitude of CD-i Players and revisions throw up all sorts of complications.



STEP 7 The emulator doesn't have CD drive emulation, only running ISOs. Most games can be extracted using programs such as Golden Hawks CDRWIN. However some games come in a CD-i Ready format that most CD programs can't handle. Fortunately CloneCD is capable of reading the 'Pregap Mode 2 Data' that typifies CD-i Ready discs. This is provided you have a CD-ROM that is capable of reading the disk in the first place. Select the option for copying a 'Game CD' and tick the boxes to 'Read SubChannel Data' from both data and audio tracks. Then start the process to create an ISO.



STEP 8 With the BIOS ROM installed in the ROM directory, and the game ISO ripped and ready to go, double click the wcdiemu.exe icon to load the CD-i Emulator. Under File, select open to load the game ISO of your choice (note: not all games are supported, such as any games which require the Digital Video Card). Then under Emulate, click start to begin emulation. There are few Settings options which require adjusting, though you might like to switch between PAL or NTSC emulation, for superior screen size or faster emulation respectively.

Note: Sadly, no version of the CD-i Emulator is currently available for the Mac, and no other CD-i emulators exist for it either. If you do want to try emulating this vastly underrated console, then using a PC is your only current choice. Considering how long it's taking for the current emulator to arrive, you shouldn't expect anything similar for the Mac any time soon.

STREET FIGHTER III: THIRD STRIKE

STILL THINK STREET FIGHTER II IS THE BEST BEAT-'EM-UP EVER MADE? THEN YOU'VE OBVIOUSLY NOT HAD A CHANCE TO PLAY CAPCOM'S SUPERB SEQUEL. IT'S TIME TO PUT THE RECORD STRAIGHT ONCE AND FOR ALL…



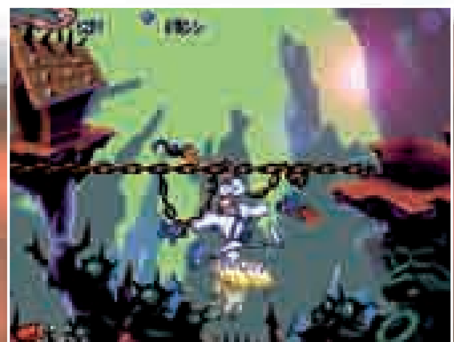
GAMING'S ILLUMINATI

Ever wondered what happens to a company's old development kits and prototype when it eventually goes into liquidation? Or perhaps you're interested in discovering where unreleased games eventually turn up? Part one of a brand new feature will answer all your questions.



SYSTEM 3

In the first of a two-part series, Retro Gamer talks to Mark Cale and John Twiddy about System 3 – its history and how its classic licences and the acquisition of Epyx will help shape its future.



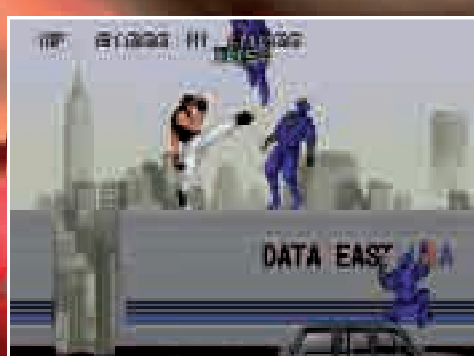
THE MAKING OF…

David Perry reveals how Earthworm Jim, an ordinary annelid with a fetish for spacesuits and big guns went on to become one of the most iconic videogame characters of the Nineties.

THE MAKING OF…

Peter J Favaro explains the intricacies of his superb Alter Ego and reveals just how difficult it was to create one of gaming's most unique experiences.





COMPANY PROFILE...

First formed in 1976, Data East found great success in the pinball and videogame markets, before eventually filing for bankruptcy some 27 years later. Retro Gamer looks back at its rich and varied history.



RETROINSPECTION...

THE AMIGA CD32 was supposed to allow Commodore to enter the lucrative console market, but somehow it became one of its biggest disasters. Retro Gamer unravels the whole sorry story.

NEXT MONTH

AND THE REST...
Back To The Eighties
The Classic Game
Retro Rated
Eastern Promise
Retro Revival
And much, much more

ON SALE 04 JAN 2007

NEXT ISSUE

retro GAMER THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

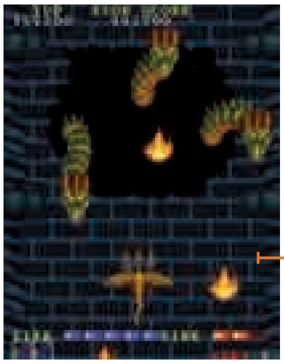
LOAD 33



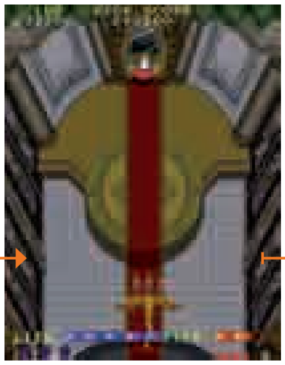


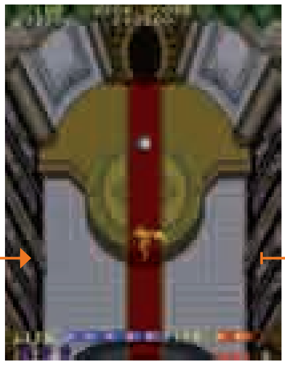
DRAGON SPIRIT

When a Princess gets kidnapped her suitor heads off in hot pursuit to rescue her – but not before he turns into a bloody big blue dragon.











SCREEN 1
Your quest is drawing to a close and as you approach the princess, all manner of vicious monstrosities are thrown in your way. This three-headed opponent can be a right pain in the arse to defeat, but he soon comes a cropper when faced with your fiery breath.

SCREEN 2
Typical! Just when you think you've rid the world of evil, another big bugger comes along and threatens to ruin everything for you. This dude is even tougher than your previous opponent, so move carefully or it's all going to end in big fat dragon tears.

SCREEN 3
Evil is vanquished and you hurry on to rescue your beloved. But what's this? Upon reaching the princess you find that she's trapped within a mirror. Fortunately the mirror soon shatters and the young royal is eventually set free. We love a happy ending.

SCREEN 4
With the princess safe it's time to go home. After a brief metamorphosis the huge dragon's body is discarded and the princess's rescuer returns to his normal mortal form. Far less impressive to look at but at least they won't have any mutant children now.

SCREEN 5
A brief interlude follows showing the happy couple reunited and reveals some of the worst Engrish we've seen. Our favourite line? "People were rejoiced to start from a nightmare, thus celebrating the restoration and jazzing up with joy." You couldn't make it up.